

Pre-Departure Information 2010 Edition



Saving Forests, Changing Lives

Contents

About Iracambi 3

1 Important Information

The Atlantic Forest 4

Biodiversity 5

The Destruction of the Forest 6

Forest Fragmentation 7

2 Before You Go

Money Money Money 8

Travel Documentation 9

Language 10

3 When You Arrive

How To Get Here 11

Accommodation 12

Food 14

Clothing 14

Safety First 15

Communication 16

The Team 17

Day to Day 18

Payment 19

What to Pack 20

About Iracambi

Our Vision:

Thriving communities
living sustainably
in a thriving landscape

Our Mission:

To work with the community to make
the conservation of the rainforest more
attractive than its' destruction

Our Story:

Ten years ago, Iracambi set out to help save the Atlantic Rainforest, not by preserving it in stasis, but by practising conservation alongside sustainable development. Today, Iracambi is a unique blend of research and front-line practise. We have an international outlook but a local output. We welcome people from around the globe to join us and help us do our part .

Saving forests , changing lives



We believe in:

Energy
Accountability
Respect
Learning by doing
Unity
Hope

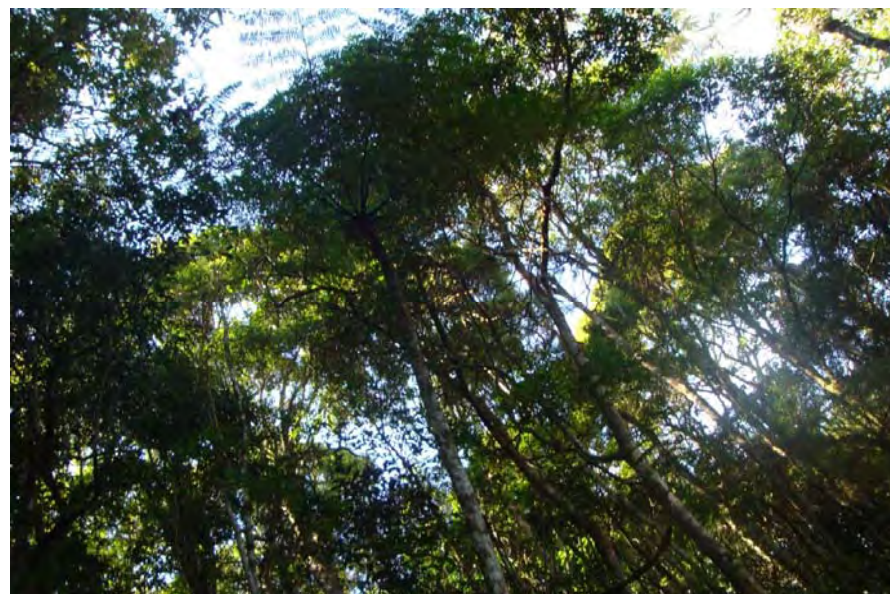
1 Important Information

The Atlantic Rainforest

The Atlantic Rainforest (*Mata Atlântica*) is quite different from its much more famous neighbor, the Amazon Rainforest. Like the Amazon, it is humid, with an average annual rainfall of about 2000 mm or 80 inches: however, it is cooler here with temperatures ranging on average from 14-21°C (57-70 °F) compared to 26-27 °C (79-80 °F) in the Amazon. The greater variations in temperature help contribute to the rainforest's immense variety of plants and animals.

That said, the term "Rainforest" technically refers to forest that receives a minimum monthly rainfall of 100mm (4 inches) throughout the year, and our part of the forest doesn't. So, technically, where Iracambi is based is the Atlantic Forest, not the Atlantic Rainforest. But a significant part of the Atlantic Forest is true rainforest, and the whole forest has, by association, come to be known as the Atlantic Rainforest, so they stick to the name everybody knows, even if scientifically speaking it is not correct.

Within the Amazon Basin, the rainforest lies at more or less the same altitude. However, the Atlantic Rainforest stretches between Rio Grande do Norte to Rio Grande do Sul, and spreads from the coast up into the mountains. The vegetation of the forest varies greatly, according to latitude and altitude and as a result there are several different classes of forest. This, too, means that the Atlantic Rainforest can lay claim to a far greater biodiversity than even that of the Amazon Rainforest.



The different classes of rainforest featured within the Atlantic Rainforest are:

- *Tropical moist broadleaf forest* -- found on coastal plains: it is characterized by a dense population of tall trees, a second, sparser layer of smaller trees, shrubs and palms, and a large number of lianas and epiphytes. No large area of this forest remains;
- *Tropical semi-deciduous forest* -- found farther inland.
- *The lower montane forest* -- found at altitudes over 800m above sea level -- has a thinner canopy about 12-25m high, denser undergrowth and a great biological diversity. Above 1200m the forest generally gives way to shrubby vegetation and grassland

The mangrove forests found in bays, estuaries and lagoons, and the xeromorphic coastal dune forests called the "Restinga" are also found within the Atlantic Rainforest ecosystem. Both are under severe threat.

Bio-diversity

In the State of Minas Gerais alone (slightly smaller than Texas), there are 750 different bird species, only 60 fewer than are found in the whole of North America. An extraordinary number of the species are endemic to the region -- that is, they are not found anywhere else in the world. 54% of the trees are endemic, as are 64% of the palms and 74% of the bromeliads. Among the fauna species, 80% of the primates are endemic, and 40% of all mammals, butterflies, reptiles, amphibians and birds.

This enormous biological richness is severely threatened. Figures published by IBAMA, the Brazilian Environmental Protection Institute, in 2003 show that 38 of the 69 severely endangered mammal species in Brazil are found in the Mata Atlântica (25 of them endemic), all the 16 endangered amphibian species (all of them endemic), 118 of the 160 bird species, and 13 of the 20 endangered reptile species. Taking a closer look at the primates, there are 21 species and subspecies of monkeys found in the Atlantic Rainforest, of which 14 are endangered. Of these 14, thirteen are species found nowhere else in the world and several of these are literally on the edge of extinction. The Woolly Spider Monkey that is resident in the Serra do Brigadeiro is the New World's largest primate and is one of its most severely threatened species.



The Destruction of the Forest

The destruction of the Amazon Rainforest receives a lot of publicity, but the fact is that the Atlantic Rainforest is much more seriously threatened. 20% of the Amazon forest has gone - but over 93% of the Atlantic Rainforest has disappeared, and with it the creatures that make it their home -- nearly 70% of the vertebrate species classified as endangered in Brazil are found in the Atlantic Rainforest.

It is widely believed that tropical forests restore their full biodiversity in 500 years. Yet, at today's rate, the Atlantic Rainforest does not have 500 years. The rate of destruction and forest clearance is not decreasing - it is accelerating. In 1988, the Atlantic Rainforest was declared a national heritage and the government prohibited any further cutting or clearance. However, in the six years from 1990 to 1995 more than 500,000 hectares were destroyed.

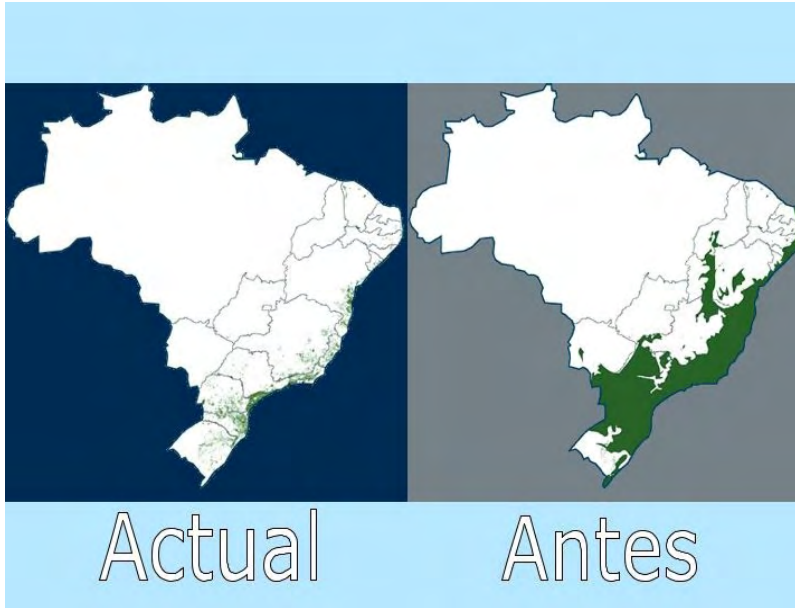
When the forest is cleared, the land rapidly loses fertility - despite the abundance of the rainforest vegetation, the soil is not incredibly rich or fertile but quite the opposite. Rainforests survive due to complex relationships between the trees and plants and tiny micro-organisms or fungi from whom they can extract the minerals and nutrients they need to grow. When the forest is cleared these microorganisms also die, and the poverty of the soil quickly becomes apparent. Once cleared and intensively farmed, its fertility is lost within 20 years or less, after which the farmer needs to clear more land to maintain his level of income.



Add this to an unstable economy and real problems result. Much of the forest that disappeared in recent years did so because of the effects of the Brazilian economy going into a sharp decline in the 1980s. The oil crisis hit hard, just at the time when Brazil had to repay large bank loans issued to the military government in the period 1965-85. Pressures on Brazil's farmers to overexploit their resources were immense. As a result, hillside soils were intensively farmed, and their fertility rapidly depleted by coffee. Then they were converted to pasture and massively over-grazed by cattle. Left unprotected against the heavy rainfall, the topsoil began to wash away and serious erosion damage set in. With the topsoil gone, the land was useless. The farmer had to clear more forest to plant his crops in order to survive.

Forest Fragmentation

This process of deforestation has left the Atlantic Rainforest in Minas Gerais severely fragmented, with few large patches of contiguous forest surviving. As you fly over Minas Gerais, you see a mosaic of forest patches, not the vast swathe of forest that you see when you fly over the Amazon. The Serra do Brigadeiro State Park, with its 15,000 ha. next to Iracambi, is therefore one of the largest fragments in the State: the size of fragments outside the park averages less than 100 ha.



From the theory of island biogeography, Iracambi knows that the smaller the fragment of forest, the fewer species it will be able to sustain and that as the fragments get smaller, species loss becomes higher. Even though some scientists do not agree that there is a universal size/species relationship, we can assume that, in the relatively homogeneous forest fragments of Southeastern Minas Gerais, this rule applies, though specialists can argue about the variables.

The important consequence of this for Iracambi is that firstly, we must learn to work with our fragmented forests and secondly we must do what we can to ensure that the process of fragmentation is halted. For this reason, our first priority in biodiversity conservation is preventing habitat loss and increasing fragment size through biological corridors.

2 Before You Go

Money Money Money!

Credit Cards

It's probably a good idea to take a Visa credit/debit card. Most countries in the developing world don't accept American Express or they may charge you an additional fee to use it. Also, most ATMs do not accept American Express. ATMs also usually provide a better exchange rate to obtain cash rather than money bureau. It's probably worth calling your bank to make sure that you can use your card in the country in which you're going to. Also be sure to inform your credit card company that you will be traveling overseas, providing specific dates and locations, so as to ensure they do not cut off your service while you are abroad.

You should exchange money as soon as you arrive in Brazil, as it will not be possible once you are at Iracambi - you can't change money in Muriaé. You can change money at the airport: the porters will even change money for you and their rates are as good as anyone else's, though of course a bank is safer. Avoid the Banco do Brasil - it's a rip-off. In Rio de Janeiro, there are "casas de cambio" but note that they are not open on weekends.

There are ATM machines in the nearest towns to Iracambi, Rosario da Limeira (thirty minutes away) and Muriaé (one and a half hours away), and any member of the staff going into town might be persuaded to take money out. It is very difficult to change dollars in Muriaé, so if you don't have an ATM card you'll have to change all your foreign currency into Reais in Rio de Janeiro. The bank that you'll most likely only be able to take money from is the Banco 24 hours. If you have any problems with your cash card initially, you can always take money out on your Visa card – as you can do this just about anywhere. Just watch the interest.

PIN Number and Expiration

Make sure that you have your PIN numbers so that you can use your credit cards at ATMs. If you cannot find them, it could take up to 10 business days to receive it from the credit card company.

This may sound obvious but make sure that your card will not expire while you are traveling. If it is, call the credit card company and order a new one.

Online Banking

Using online banking will greatly ease your life when traveling so you can keep up with your balances.

Travel Documentation

Vaccinations

It is important that you ensure you are inoculated against the following:

- Hepatitis A
- Tetanus
- Typhoid
- Yellow Fever
- Diphtheria
- Polio

Your doctor may also suggest Hepatitis B and Rabies. Iracambi is not located in a malaria area, but if you plan to travel to other parts of Brazil, such as the Pantanal or the Amazon, you will need a suitable prophylactic. Ask your health center at home before leaving.

Visas

Visas are required for tourists of many nationalities, including Australia, Canada and United States; the visas are usually for 90 days, with a possible extension for another 90 days. If you are from the UK you don't need a Visa, but the length of stay options are still the same. Volunteer visas are only given to people who are officially volunteering for longer periods of time with NGOs or for religious organizations. **Under no circumstances attempt to apply for a volunteer visa!**

As stated above, you are allowed to be in the country as a tourist for 3 months, and then extended for another 3 months. As you are only in Brazil for a month (or slightly more) you will need to enter on a tourist visa. You will also need to put an address on the arrival slip on arrival. Please enter the address of Iracambi:

Fazenda Iracambi Caixa Postal No. 1, Rosário da Limeira 36878-000 Minas Gerais, Brazil

Travel Insurance

Iracambi doesn't cover you for Travel and Health Insurance. Please take measures to cover yourself prior to departure for Iracambi. It may also be possible to extend your home contents insurance to cover you for overseas travel. You will need to send the details of your insurance, together with details on your next of kin, to Iracambi before your departure to Brazil.

Passport

Ensure that you have a minimum six months validity left on your passport. Some countries will not allow you to enter with less than six months left on the passport. Also, ensure you have enough empty pages in your passport. If you have no empty pages left on your passport or are low, then you will need to get extra pages added to your passport to allow you to apply for visas.

Language

Portuguese

It is highly advisable that you learn some Portuguese before you head out to Brazil – best to start learning as early as you possibly can. If you want to do any community based research or work then you will need to be able to speak Portuguese. If the work you are doing will not bring you in to contact with other members of the community then this will not be such an issue. Having said that, you really will get much more out of your experience if you pick up some of the language - it will make your trip just that much better.

Tips

Also sign up for a little Portuguese phrase everyday: <http://www.bitesizedlanguages.com>

Another good site for Portuguese language is:

<http://www.easyportuguese.com>

You can also teach yourself Portuguese at home or on your way to work on your iPod . Rosetta Stone comes highly recommended:

<http://www.rosettastone.com>

There are many language books out there. Another is the 'Teach Yourself Brazil Portuguese' learning guide. You can find it on Amazon.com.

Before you leave, you may want to bring with you the Lonely Planet phrase book. This will help you with the key phrases in every possible situation.

3 When You Arrive

How to Get Here

Please try to plan to arrive at Iracambi on a Monday or Tuesday as our staff do not work weekends.

FROM RIO DE JANEIRO

Rio is the closer of the two cities and if you arrive before Noon you will be able to make it to Iracambi same day.

Once you arrive at the Rio airport and make it through customs, head straight out of the terminal and head to the three taxi stands just ahead. Go to any one of the three and purchase a ticket to the 'Rodoviaria' or bus station. This will cost you R\$60.00, which is a bit more expensive, but better than being ripped off by stray taxis waiting outside the airport.

Once you get to the Rodoviaria, go up stairs and go left to the **RIO DOCE** booth and ask for '*uma passagem para Muriae*' (pronounced Moo-RE-I-A). This will cost approximately R\$45.00 and the trip will be 5-6 hours depending on traffic and the state of the roads. Muriaé is NOT the last stop of the bus so be aware of where you are! Buses are frequent throughout the day.

Once in Muriaé, go into the bus terminal and take a right up to the ticket booths. Go to **NOVO HORIZONTE** and buy a ticket to 'Rosário da Limeria'. This will cost approximately R\$7.00 and the trip will last approximately 1-1½ hours. Rosário da Limeria is the last stop. The last bus leaves at 6pm everyday.

Once in Limeira, there should be taxis around. If not just ask around at the bar and someone will be able to take you to Iracambi. Ask to be taken to Centro, which will be the second entrance you pass, not the first one with the gate. DO NOT PAY MORE THAN R\$50.00 FOR THIS RIDE!

FROM SÃO PAULO

From the airport, take a taxi or a the shuttle, although this is difficult with large amounts of luggage, to the 'Rodoviaria'. Go to the right side of the terminal with the ticket booths and go to the **ITAPEMIRIM** booth. From there you can buy a ticket to Muriae. Take note that Muriae is NOT the last stop so be aware of where you are. The last bus is at 10 pm.

Accommodation

Life at Iracambi

Volunteering at Iracambi provides a fantastic opportunity to live in a way that is likely to be quite different to the life you are used to. Sharing with people of many different nationalities, backgrounds, skills, ages and interests. Not to mention sharing with a few bugs.

Iracambi is what you make of it. We invite volunteers to help us in Iracambi's work if you'd like to, but we encourage you to take responsibility for their own work, experience, lifestyle and for each other. If you are not used to being self-sufficient and need to have your hand held all the time, this might not be the best place for you. Together with your fellow volunteers you will need to find a mutually agreeable way to run your temporary home.



You are likely to be living with people of all different nationalities (In July 2009, Iracambi hosted people from Brazil, UK, Spain, Canada, France, Holland, China, and the US) with ages ranging from 18 upwards.

The Research Center is located on a working farm, which includes a large area of native forest as well as tree crops. There are rivers to swim in, mountains to climb, forest trails to hike, and a welcoming local community.

In your spare time you can learn about coffee (planting, picking, roasting and drinking) cheese making, the uses of medicinal plants, as well as swapping stories with your fellow residents.

You may also choose to go for a local drink, but please note that the nearest bar is a five-mile hard hike away....

Housing

Upon arriving at Centro, you will be assigned a room in either the main Center building or a nearby smaller casinha. You will be living with other fellow volunteers and will probably be required to share a room (with someone of the same sex).

The Center is located a few kilometers apart from the farm and consists of six houses. They are traditional and simple in design - built in the same way as the houses that people in the area live in. The Center is the biggest of the volunteer houses, with four bedrooms, each sleeping two people, a living room, library and two bathrooms. The other volunteer houses all have two bedrooms, bathroom and a living room. They each sleep four people.

The houses are all well maintained and have electricity and hot showers 24 hours a day.

The Iracambi Homestay Program – A Cultural Exchange

Another accommodation option for volunteers is to stay in the home of a family in the local community. Participation in the program gives volunteers and researchers an entirely new and privileged insight into Brazilian life and culture, as well as providing extra income for local families.

On arrival, you will be placed in Iracambi Volunteer or Researcher accommodation, but you can apply to take part in the program at any time after your arrival. A place will be allocated depending on availability and on the fulfillment of certain criteria (for example, you must speak at least basic Portuguese).



Food

The food at Iracambi is provided by Dona Carminha's Sabor da Serra catering service.

Breakfast usually consists of fruit, toast, and coffee. The food is typical Brazilian fare consists mainly of rice, beans, potatoes, salad and cake or bread.

Although it is rather difficult to be a vegetarian in Brazil, it is quite simple at Iracambi. Meat or chicken is served once or twice a week at most and there always other dishes available.

Food is bought from the local communities to ensure that it is as fresh and organic as possible.



Clothing

The weather during the summer months (November to March) can be hot (up to 35 degrees Celsius or 95 °F) during the day and a tendency for storms and heavy rainfall at night.

Temperatures drop in the evening, but still remain relatively warm. This is also the wet season, and if you are planning to come during this time you will need waterproof jackets and footwear.

Clothes that will dry quickly are also highly recommended.

Winter months see cooler temperatures of around 20 degrees during the day and down to 6 degrees at nighttime (40-70 °F).

During the day it tends to be dry. Iracambi is a very casual place – so just take the clothes that will keep you warm and dry, and that you feel comfortable wearing.

Safety First

General

Safety is a risk in Brazil and anyone traveling to Brazil or spending time in the cities needs to be aware of this. When in Rio - never flash cash, don't walk around with expensive objects such as cameras, watches or jewelry, and try and keep as little money on you at any one time. As well, don't walk down the street talking on your mobile, and try not to carry big handbags. It is a beautiful country and the people amazing (!!), but like any developing country, there is crime, and you need to be aware of how to avoid it. Look around and see what the locals are doing – and do your best to blend in.

AIDS - Brazil is a high-risk country, so be careful.

With regards to Iracambi - all tropical environments have an abundance of insects, parasites and exciting sounding diseases. Iracambi is no exception.

Insects: There are an enormous number of insects, but none that could harm you. Ticks are a nuisance, especially between July / August, but do not carry Lyme disease. Jiggers, burrowing fleas, are not uncommon in early Summer (November / December). There are lots of big, hairy spiders around. Some are said to be poisonous, so we'd advise you to keep out of their way.

Snakes: Venomous snakes live in the environment so watch where you step. If you are bitten, serum is stored at the main farmhouse.

Medical/Health

Ensure you familiarize yourself with the international medical cover your home country has provided, and that you know what actions to take in case you need to make a claim. Though we take every reasonable caution to ensure that volunteers are safe and that medical attention is accessible, please keep in mind that you will be living in an isolated area. For this reason we cannot accept volunteers with chronic medical conditions and who may need emergency assistance.

The Water

Iracambi receives its water directly from streams in the surrounding mountains and is very clean and good to drink. Most volunteers have no problems with the water, but it may take a few days for your stomach to adjust. There are also filters available throughout Iracambi.

Communication

Iracambi can be contacted in various ways. Feel free to get in touch with us at any time so we can address any questions or concerns you may have before coming to spend time with us.

Mailing Address:

Fazenda Iracambi Caixa Postal No. 1
Rosário da Limeira, 36878-000
Minas Gerais, Brazil

Phone: +55 32 3723 1297

Fax: 32 3711 1086

Skype ID: Iracambi

Email: volunteers@iracambi.com,
iracambi@iracambi.com

Mail is collected once a week from our box in Limeira. Letters to and from Europe take around 2 weeks while packages take 6-7 weeks. From the United States, letters take about 10 days to arrive and packages around 5 weeks.

Visitors

By general agreement, Iracambi has decided that people should not have personal visitors during their stay here.



The Team



Marcelo
Project Manager
Capacitação Comunitária
Brasil



Virgilio
Ecotourism Consultant
Brasil



Robin and Binka
Binka- NGO president
United Kingdom
Robin- Research Centre Director
Kenya



Eliab
Volunteer Program Coordinator
Brasil

Day to Day

Volunteers and researchers generally wake up and are ready for work by 9am, taking a break for lunch at 12.30 or so at the Cozinha. Lunch is cooked for the volunteers on weekdays and is typical Brazilian fare. Work then continues after lunch until approximately 5pm. Depending on your project you could spend most of your time in the forest, nursery, neighboring hills or enjoying the spectacular views from the office and classroom.

Most evenings at Iracambi are spent socializing and cooking dinner, a responsibility rotated amongst the volunteers. Otherwise the main activities are reading, playing cards, listening to music and on some days playing soccer with the locals. And if you're up for it, the evening activities may include a trip into Limeira, for grocery shopping or a trip to the bar for a drink or two, but the drive is approximately a half an hour and the trip is generally an evening long event.

Come with an open mind. Take it as it comes. Be fearless. If you get stressed or unhappy with the way the project's going, take the afternoon off and go for a walk in the hills. Iracambi is a wonderful place to let your mind wonder and to relax. Make the most of it when you can! If you need to, go to bed early or lie in because pretty much everything can take it out of you, especially in the beginning. And really – do watch those energy levels – the littlest things will get the better of you. And that's okay – it's all part of the journey. So don't be too hard on yourself.



Payment

Minimum Stay

For researchers, the minimum stay is one month. This gives you enough time to have a look round and get a feel for the place. Volunteers can stay less, if they like, but we feel a month is about the length of time it takes to allow people to be able to make a real contribution to the place, which is very important to us.

Fees- We kindly request that payment be made BEFORE you arrive

We charge (main house)* *For first month:* R\$1.200,00 *For the following month:* R\$1.150,00 *Third and subsequent month:* R\$1.100,00. This fee include: food, accommodation, Internet access 24 hours a day. -

**If you choose to stay in our semi-private cottages please add R\$200,00 per month.*

If you need beer, soft drinks and stuff like that, you buy them yourself. Beyond small items and nights in town, there are very few expenditures required while at Iracambi. Use the exchange rate of the day to pay: you can check it here: <http://www.xe.com/>

Payments to Amigos de Iracambi can be made in the following ways:

1. Direct transfer to the Iracambi bank account in the United States:

Please e-mail us for the details. 2. With a credit card using PayPal or Kagi, on webpage `Donations' in our website:

<http://www.iracambi.com/english/donate.html>

Where the money goes:

ITEM	COST – BR R\$/month
Coordinator's salary	1500
Internet connection	400
Electricity	300
Cleaning/laundry	400
Building maintenance	300
TOTAL	2950
For 5 people – per person	590
Food per person	540
Support for local interns	70
TOTAL per person/month	1200

What to pack

Checklist

- Sleeping bag – we do have sheets, and blankets, but you may be warmer at night or more comfortable in your own sleeping bag.
- Mosquito net
- Towel/s
- Water bottle (Nalgene or Sigg)
- Torch/flashlight
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent (lots)
- Antiseptic cream/lotion
- Shorts
- Long cotton trousers/pants (jeans are not a good idea in the forest and take ages to dry!)
- Swimwear (there are natural pools to swim in)
- Some warm clothing (perhaps a fleece) for cold evenings
- Rainproof outerwear (jacket, galoshes)
- Work gloves
- Terrain sandals, durable boots, possibly rubber boots if your stay is during the rainy season, and of course your soccer boots if you wish - this is Brazil
- Clothing you are willing to wear out (it can be very muddy)
- A laptop: Iracambi can connect you to their network
- Electricity is 110 volts 60 cycles, except in the North and North East, where is 220 volts. Keep in mind if bringing things to be plugged in
- Camera
- Antihistamine
- Converter/adapters
- Toiletries – you may not be able to buy the specific stuff you like when in Brazil
- Be practical but don't forget some of your favourite things
- Alarm clock
- Ipod
- DVDs for nights in

Communications with friends and family

It is important to keep in touch with your friends and family while you are away. Ensure that they know your email address, IM ids, user names, or blogsites. SKYPE