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Rio was absolutely AMAZING! It was my third Australian Team but first Paralympics. Before we arrived in Rio we had a camp in Florida at the IMG academy for two weeks to acclimatise coming from our winter into the warmer weather. IMG was a huge school and training facility for elite athlete-students and was the size of a suburb (we had to catch a golf cart tram from our apartments to the food court and then another tram to the gym or track). My highlights of Florida (apart from their amazing chocolate milk) were our shop visits and to Bradington Beach! The water was so hot even though an overcast day (it always rains in Florida with a lot of thunder and amazing lightning storms). There was fish everywhere and they were not shy! They would come right up and bump straight into you.

We thought Florida was great but then we arrived in Rio! One of my favourite parts of travelling (and one of the reasons why I travel) is the opportunity to experience and learn about other cultures. I spent a lot of my free time socialising, meeting and making new friends. As a language student I was able to practice my Indonesian with the Indonesian Athletics Team! The Rio village was beautiful with pools, parks, playgrounds, games rooms, huge food court and table tennis tables for each building! There was always a game of table tennis going for anyone to join in on, or to just watch. Sometimes everyone joined in and there was 5-6 people playing on the one table! This always resulted in much fun and laughter. Often you found yourself versing a table tennis or tennis athlete who would win easily (obviously!)

Competition day came very slowly - the day before I got my hair and nails done with the Aussie flag at the village salon (for free!). The competition track was over an hour away, so we got to see little bits of Rio's city. Everything before the competition happened quickly - massage, warm up, call room then the Javelin began. It was nothing like Commonwealth Games, the Rio crowd was so loud - I couldn't even hear the New Zealand athlete sitting next to me literally screaming in my ear! This competition was definitely my favourite competition to date. My coach couldn't make it to Rio but the team coach from our team filmed each of my throws and sent them to my coach in Australia who responded with instant feedback that was then relayed to me - so I was getting the best tips possible. I then threw a 2-metre personal best to come 5th! It was very exciting and even more so because I knew I got to compete in this stadium one more time with the same girls in discus, in a week’s time. Although the wait was a long one, the crowds were so worth it! It was Saturday and the stadium was packed so it was even louder than before and this time, everyone had finished competing, so not only did I have a few friends from the Australian Team supporting me at the track, I had many new friends from other countries cheering me on too!

Once competition was over it was time to celebrate with everyone! A group of us celebrated with the British team until very late then it was a really early start the next morning for a whirlwind sightseeing tour of Sugarloaf Mountain then off to the Closing Ceremony. The Closing Ceremony was great but will not come close to the feeling you get marching into the Paralympic Stadium at the Opening Ceremony. It was such an amazing experience being front and centre with my teammates and a feeling I won't ever forget! One of the Australian High Jumpers insisted we jump to the front - and I am so grateful. An incredible experience: the crowds cheering and waving at us, the music and colours of Rio and we were at the front seeing it all!

Closing Ceremony was just as exciting, we were able to celebrate everyone's successes with the Australian Team and other countries too, which was so much fun. We had a big celebration after the Closing Ceremony which I'm pretty sure continued until the next morning! Rio was an amazing experience with a beautiful team of athletes, some of whom are CPSARA athletes too! I made many new friends, experiences and memories I will forever cherish.