

## Brazil – 2006

This year the International Symposium on Multiparticle Dynamics (ISMD) followed by the Workshop on Particle Correlations and Femtoscopy (WPCF) were in Brazil. Last year they were in Czechia and I had a nice vacation afterwards travelling around.

I thought of doing the same this year in Brazil, but after searching the internet and looking at some travel books in the library, I decided not to. I was mainly interested in the Panatal and Amazon regions with also possibly some old (in American terms) colonial cities and the huge waterfalls on the Argentinian border. But, the distances are huge, making air travel almost a necessity. Further, the schedules did not look very appealing with planes late at night or very early in the morning. And, the prices are not *that* cheap. At the “eco-lodges” I could find on the web, the prices were at European or U.S. levels, with everything based on double occupancy and usually with no reduction if you were alone. Possibly it would all have turned out OK if I had just gone and played it by ear. But basically I decided it wasn't worth all the time and expense to see a few exotic wild creatures.

This is my first trip using a Dutch passport. Brazil requires a visum for U.S. citizens which costs \$100, which they impose because that is what the U.S. charges Brazilians. For the E.U., no visum is needed. And a Dutch passport cost less than €40, about \$50.

**Friday, 1 September** My flight to São Paulo left early, which meant getting a train at slightly past 6. It was on time, so I had time to try out my bank's airport lounge, something new for their “preferred” customers. It was quiet—I was the only one, but rather disappointing compared to frequent flyer lounges. I had been hoping for some orange or tomato juice, but the only thing they had was coffee. Unfortunately, I have not been flying KLM enough recently, so I no longer have free access to their lounges. Fortunately, I do still have right to priority boarding so that I jump to the head of the queue at security and can board first along with the business class and travellers with small children. That means I can be sure that I can get my carry-on into the luggage bins with no problem. Despite all the recent increase in security, it seems that only flights to the U.S. and Great Britain are affected. There were no new restrictions, although I did have the impression that the were checking things a little more carefully.

At any rate, we left on schedule at 10. The flight was uneventful, simply long. The plane was only about two-thirds full. I had a window seat and the seat next to me was vacant. We arrived at 16:50, about 10 minutes ahead of schedule. Having only hand baggage, and thanks to almost no lines at immigration, I was quickly through customs and into the terminal. I changed some money and found the tourist information office, which provided me with a couple of maps of the more interesting parts of São Paulo and told me where I could get a bus. I had reserved (on the internet) a room at a hotel near Praça República. There was an express airport bus to Praça República, but it was not going to leave for 40 minutes. There was also a bus which went to the nearest subway, which would leave in just a few minutes, at 17:30. So I took it. It was also cheaper: R\$3 plus R\$2.10 for the subway instead of R\$23.90 for the express bus. (R\$ is the symbol for the Brazilian currency, the *real*, plural *reais*. The exchange rate is, or was at the time, US\$1≈R\$2.15 and €1≈R\$2.50.) It was rush hour and traffic was heavy. It was also raining. The bus was nearly full, and became packed as it made several stops. The metro station was crowded. I groaned when I saw the long lines at the ticket windows, but they actually moved very fast. There were also long lines at the gate onto the platform. But they too moved fast. The trains were surprisingly frequent, every few minutes, and so, despite the crowds, not too full. I was in my hotel within an hour and a half after walking a few blocks from Praça República in the rain. The hotel room was rather run down, but clean and quiet since it was on an inner courtyard. And the staff were helpful enough. The man at the desk, seeing that I had my passport in my shirt pocket, advised against that—too easy for pickpockets.

I had been planning on walking around to see what sights there were. That was one of the reasons (the other was price) for picking a hotel near Praça República. The older buildings of the city, *e.g.*, churches, are in this area. I had forgotten though that it gets dark so early near the equator. Night fell

while I was on the bus from the airport. That, coupled with the rain, made going out not too attractive. Nevertheless, I decided to take a walk, and maybe get something to eat, although I was not particularly hungry.

This part of the city is not the best part. Many of the buildings are rather worn down, and the streets not particularly well lit, though not horribly dark either. There are hills, which means streets on various levels with bridges and stairs. So navigating is three-dimensional, not always easy with a two-dimensional map. I got lost a couple of times. Fortunately I had my compass. With the darkness and rain, I did not see many sights, and I'm not sure what most of the few rather impressive buildings I saw actually were.

There were lots of people on the streets most of time. So I was not too frightened, despite all you hear about street crime in Brazil. I heard that you are advised to carry R\$10 or so loose in your pocket to give to a robber. Usually that's enough to satisfy him. Otherwise he gets rough, usually with a knife. Or, so they say.

All the bars were full, with people spilling out onto the streets. I wondered whether this was a Friday evening phenomenon or happened every evening. Everyone was apparently having a good time. Except for the homeless, who were trying to bed down under whatever shelter they could find.

**Saturday, 2 September** This morning was my first Brazilian breakfast, a buffet with various fruit juices, fresh fruits (melon, papaya), sweet breads and cakes, rolls, ham and cheese, coffee and tea. The ham and cheese was nothing to write home about. The fresh fruit was. It was a pretty good breakfast, though the worst of the breakfasts I was to have, because, I suppose, this was the cheapest hotel, only R\$70..

I had to be at the Institute of Theoretical Physics at 9 in order to get the conference bus to Paraty. It was easy to get there with the metro. There were lots of stands setting up at Praça República selling mostly souvenirs. The trip involved all three of São Paulo's metro lines. But early on Saturday morning, the trains were pretty empty, and even so, quite frequent. I never had to wait more than a few minutes. But I had not been sure that it would go so quickly and so had allowed lots of time.

The institute is in one of the nicest areas of São Paulo, the Avenue Paulista area. This is also the financial district. Coming up out of the metro, the first building I saw was Banco Real—ABN-AMRO, the Brazilian daughter of my Dutch bank. It was a few blocks walk to the institute. I was about a half hour early. The institute is in a pair of old houses, surrounded by high-rise modern apartment buildings, all of which are surrounded by high fences, and some have guards at the entrance. I was later told that the institute must vacate its buildings at the end of this year. Although they didn't say, I suspect that another high-rise will take their place. I did not mind waiting in the courtyard shaded by a variety of trees, most of them numbered, but without labels to identify what kind of trees they were.

By 9, ten or so other physicists had shown up, including a couple of locals from the organizing committee, but no bus. It arrived about 15 minutes late. Boarding went slowly, because the driver insisted on putting labels with the owner's name on all the baggage. And we all had to be checked off on the list of people taking the bus. We had been asked earlier by e-mail for our passport numbers, which also had to be on this list—apparently a requirement for inter-state buses, which this was, since Paraty is in the state of Rio de Janeiro, while São Paulo is in the state of São Paulo.

Finally all aboard, we headed for the airport to pick up people who had arrived in the morning. There too, there were a number of logistic problems. The people had been told to gather outside the Diners Club lounge, but it turned out there were two Diners Club lounges. Finally, shortly before noon, we managed to leave.

We stopped at the first rest area on the expressway for lunch. It was a very modern type of restaurant. On entering you were given a card, like a credit card, which you presented at the self-service islands where you picked up food or drink. Finally, when you left the card was processed by the cash register giving you an itemized bill to pay.

Then it was nearly five hours to get to Paraty. We passed through a number of small towns, drove along a few beaches, and did a lot of ascending and descending with lots of tight curves. The mountains

extend right down to the coast. There were many nice views. It reminded me a bit of the Pacific coast in California south of San Francisco. The towns we passed through were rather varied, from rather poor looking to well-to-do. The houses or apartment buildings of the latter were well protected with fences and in some cases guards.

Paraty is a small, old, colonial city, whose historic center is well preserved. The streets are cobblestone, the biggest cobblestones I've ever seen. I was glad I had chosen a hotel a couple of blocks outside the historic center. It was on the street where the bus let us all off. So I could easily wheel my suitcase a couple of blocks to the hotel. It is built around a patio with a small swimming pool (which I never saw anyone use) and a patio, partly roofed over, with fairly exotic sorts of trees. The room was adequate, much better than the one in São Paulo. All told, it was quite nice for R\$100 per night, including breakfast.

After unpacking, I walked into town to look around. It is not easy walking on the cobblestones. You have to keep your eyes on the ground, which is difficult when you want to sight-see. There was a reception for us at the Cultural Center in the middle of the historic center. It had been a school building, but now serves as a local museum and a conference center for up to about 150 people, and we were about 100. There were various *hors d'oeuvres* and drinks including various fruit juices, wine, and, of course, cachaça. They describe cachaça as sugar cane liquor; what the difference is with rum, I don't know, maybe just that it is produced in Brazil. There were sufficient *hors d'oeuvres* that I didn't need dinner. Since I was still a bit tired from the long flight, I went to bed early.

**Sunday, 3 September** Using my cell phone as an alarm clock worked, although it could be a bit louder. It would have been nicer to have been able to sleep longer, but I couldn't afford to be late this morning, since I was the first speaker, and it started at 9.

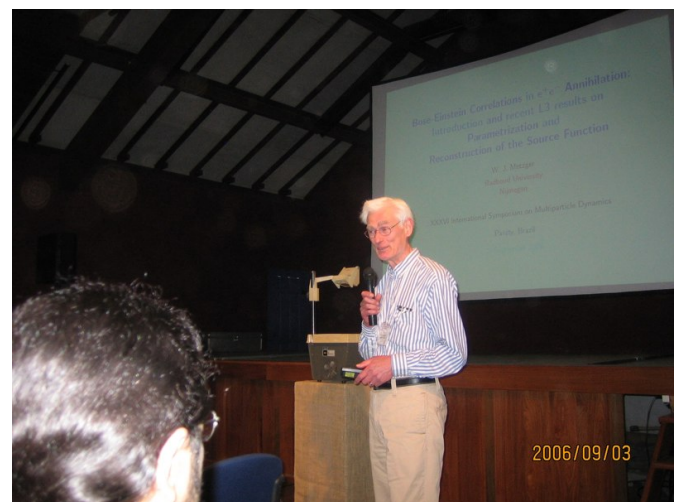
Breakfast was much like at the hotel in São Paulo, but nicer: good fresh fruit—papaya, melon, mangos, pineapple, bananas (a very tasty, small sort); various fruit juices; sweet breads; two or three cakes (which seemed more appropriate for dessert or a late-afternoon visit to a *conditorei*); bread and rolls; ham, cheese, jam, honey; cereal, coffee and tea. And you could order eggs if you wanted. Maybe I'm forgetting something.

Being Sunday, the town was pretty deserted when I walked to the Cultural Center.

My talk went well. It is sort of nice being the first speaker. You are forced to have your talk ready before you come. So you aren't spending part of the conference finishing it. The coffee breaks were like an extension of breakfast, though less choice of fruit and juices. There was a nice selection of cookies and cakes, coffee and tea. As you would expect in Brazil, the coffee was pretty good.

For lunch we were on our own. I went with a couple of others to a little cafe for a sandwich. However on other days I skipped lunch. With the large breakfast and extensive coffee breaks, I didn't need it, and I could use the time to read some of my e-mail.

In the evening we were also on our own. I stayed late at the Cultural Center getting caught up on my e-mail, and by the time I was finished practically everyone else had left. I asked one of the Brazilians to suggest some good restaurants. He pointed out a few he said he had tried. I went to one of them. I had some kind of fish. It was not bad, though I don't know what kind of fish it was. It seemed to be true everywhere that the menu simply said fish, also the Portuguese version of the menu did not specify the kind. There was live entertainment in most of the restaurants, for which there was a fixed charge of R\$2.50 added to the bill.





**Monday, 4 September** This afternoon, after lunch, we had a guided walking tour around Paraty. We had a surprise when we came out of the Cultural Center: The streets were flooded with several inches of water! We managed, by walking as close as possible to the buildings, where the stones were a bit higher, to get more inland where the streets were still dry. The guide later explained that the town was laid out this way on purpose. The streets slope gradually down to sea level. At high tide, the streets are flooded, and thus cleaned. She said that there is a city in Portugal (I've forgotten the name) laid out in a similar fashion. All very good, but it made the sightseeing tour more difficult.

The historic center of Paraty is bounded by a small river, Rio Pequerê Açu, on the north and the sea, Baía de Paraty, on the east and most of the south, there being another small river, Rio Mateus Nunes, along the rest of the southern edge of town. So it is really only the western edge of town which is fully accessible by land.

On a hill across the river to the north is an old fort, Forte Defensor Perpétuo, which sounds rather exaggerated. It didn't look like much of a fort, but I guess when it was built back in 1703 (rebuilt in 1822) with a few cannon it could have sunk ships in the bay.

At the time it was built, Paraty was the port from which all the gold and diamonds from the interior were shipped to the King in Portugal. Later it would lose this status as a new road made Rio de Janeiro more easily accessible.

Apparently the site of Paraty was originally a place where the Indians came to fish. They dried the fish to produce fish meal. The kind of fish, then very abundant, was called *pirati*, which also meant bay. The town is named after the bay rather than after the fish.

Paraty was founded in 1636 to replace a rapidly growing settlement, but in 1640 the center of town was around the fort. It was only in 1726 that the "historic center" was laid out, according to the best planning ideas of the times. The Masons played a large part, and their symbols are visible "everywhere," *e.g.*, three of the four corners of an intersection having stone columns in the corner of the building, but the fourth corner not, the columns thus forming a triangle.

The buildings are mostly two-story, and this being a port, were largely occupied by merchants (import/export we would say today). So the houses served as storeroom, office, and living space.







There is, of course, a large square, where we stood to listen to the guide describe the largest church of Paraty across the flooded street from the square, Matriz de Nossa Senhora dos Remédios. The first version of this church was built in 1646. It gave way to a new, larger church, which was completed in 1712. But in 1787 it too started to be replaced. That took a while, until 1873. The church is neoclassical, and rather grand. It was closed, but I went back one evening.

There are several other churches: Igreja Nossa Senhora do Rosário e São Benedito dos Homens Pretos, built in 1725, was for the black slaves; Igreja Santa Rita dos Pardos Libertos (1722) was for the freed slaves; and the rich white ladies, not being satisfied with the Matriz de Nossa Senhora dos Remédios currently being rebuilt, had their own church constructed, the Capela de Nossa Senhora das Dores in 1800.

The town had its ups and downs through the centuries. Sugar cane was important for a while, and at its height there were more than 200 stills in Paraty producing *caçaça*, for which the local name is *pinga*. Today there are still a few. And all the stores sell their produce. There were several stores selling nothing else—the choice was staggering: not aged, aged for various times in wood or not, dry, sweet.

Paraty is now experiencing a new rebirth as a tourist center—“ecological tourism” is the motto.

In the evening I tried an Argentinian restaurant. This was my only meat meal, a steak, in Paraty. Every other evening was fish.



**Tuesday, 5 September** This afternoon was the conference excursion, a boat trip. Again the streets were flooded, which made it difficult to get to the pier. In fact the only solution was to take off our shoes and wade. It was about a foot deep at the deepest. Fortunately, the water was warm, although the air was cool enough that a light jacket was necessary. Lunch was served on deck—choice of fish, chicken, or vegetarian. I took fish—OK.

The boats—we were split over two boats, there apparently being no boat large enough for all of us—took us to several places in the bay. At one place you could go swimming from the boat. Snorkels were provided, the idea being to look at the local fish. Maybe a quarter of the people did go swimming. At another place you could be ferried to land to take a look around at what purported to be a small farm, which, however, seemed to be deserted. Well, it was a mildly enjoyable afternoon, and the weather was nice.



I walked around town in the evening, and by luck was at the Matriz de Nossa Senhora dos Remédios as the evening service was finishing. Our entire time in Paraty was during the Festival of Nossa Senhora dos Remédios, a ten-day (or so) festival during which there are processions twice a day. So at the end of the service, the statue of the Virgin was carried out of the church to be paraded through the town, accompanied by a small brass and drum band and people in local costume. From time to time they set off fire crackers.

This was just one of many festivals. There seems to be one almost every month. We just missed the Festival da Pinga in August.

**Wednesday, 6 September** Conference all day, and in the evening the conference banquet—there *was* a restaurant big enough for all of us.



**Thursday, 7 September** Again, conference all day, but in the evening the meeting of the “Elders,” of which I am one. That is what we call the governing committee of this series of conferences. Anyone who has been involved in organizing the conference is an Elder. Since we once organized the conference in Holland, I am one. We evaluate the current conference and make the formal decision on where the conference will be the next year.

In the old days when Elders were young, the tradition was that everyone brought a bottle of spirits, and the idea was to drink it all. Now that most Elders are older, few bring a bottle, and little is drunk of the bottles there are. For this Elders’ meeting the organizers brought us by small boat to a restaurant on an island in the bay, where we had dinner and then our meeting. It looked like it would have been a nice restaurant with nice views of the bay if it had not already been dark when we got there.

At dinner I sat next to the two professors who organized the conference. Both are ethnic Japanese. It turns out that São Paulo has the largest ethnic Japanese population of any city outside of Japan. The older of the two, who turned 70 this year, was born in Brazil, his father having emigrated from Japan. Apparently around the 1920’s the U.S. cut off immigration from Asia, or in any case from Japan. Japanese wanting to emigrate turned then to South America. The younger, by a few years (so essentially my age), of the two professors came to Brazil as a post-doc but then could not find a job back in Japan and so stayed in Brazil. I said that that story sounded familiar to me (and explained—they, of course, had always thought I was native Dutch.)

**Friday, 8 September** The conference ended at noon, and at 2 we stood waiting for the bus, which was late giving some anxious moments to people whose plane was that evening. However, I was just going back to São Paulo for the WPCF. The bus first dropped some people off at the airport and then brought us to our hotel, a very nice hotel across the street from the Banco Real, and a 5 minute walk to the Physics Institute where the workshop was held.

The hotel was included in the conference fee, and was really a bargain. To begin with the room was not just a room, but a suite with bedroom, living room, bathroom including a whirlpool bath, and a small kitchenette (but with no dishes). In the evening there was a buffet dinner in the hotel with plenty of choices of reasonable quality.

**Saturday, 9 September** Here too, breakfast was a large selection of fruit and cakes, as well as cheese, eggs, sausages, and cereal. Conference all day. Lunches at the hotel were included in the conference fee. They were also buffet style with lots of choices. Dinner at the hotel.



**Sunday, 10 September** Conference all day.

The conference dinner was at a *churrascaria*, a paradise for meat-lovers. It is an all-you-can-eat for a fixed price system. To start with there is a buffet with salads, vegetables, fish. Once you are seated with your plate full from this buffet, the waiters begin to come with grilled meat. They come with it on a spit, tell you what cut of meat it is, and if you say you want some start to slice it. Then you take hold of the slice with your set of tongs, and the waiter finishes slicing it. And they keep coming until you change the green sign on your table to red. When you are ready for more you set it back to green. In all there are 9 or 10 different cuts of beef plus lamb and maybe goat. At the end, when you finally can't eat any more, there is the buffet of desserts. To get an idea look at [www.bovinus.com.br](http://www.bovinus.com.br)

**Monday, 11 September** Conference until mid-afternoon. Then those who wanted to were taken on a bus tour around São Paulo. I didn't go, preferring to go off on my own to do some shopping—bought a pair of shoes. In the evening we were on our own for dinner, but given the huge meal the night before and the large lunches, I just got by with a snack.

**Tuesday, 12 September** Since my plane was not until the evening, I had the morning free. I decided to go to MASP, the art museum of São Paulo. It was just a couple of blocks away, but did not open until 10. So I first went to an exhibition of modern art in the Banco Real. That was quite nice. Basically the entire lobby of the bank was devoted to the exhibition. There were informative explanations in both Portuguese and English. There were a few European pieces, but it was mostly Brazilian. There were several school groups visiting, and the bank had several people employed to give mini-tours and to answer questions.

At 10 I was at MASP. It was even free for people over 65, and I guess I looked old enough because I got my free ticket just by asking for it—no documentation needed. The MASP is a modern building with an exoskeleton, which allows a huge exhibition room with no interior walls, and no ground floor—at street level it is an open plaza, where there was a market of antiques and souvenirs, and an elevator to go up and actually enter the museum as well as a stairway going down to the basement exhibition area. This arrangement must simplify security enormously.

The main collection is on the first floor. It is basically European art, with a bit of Brazilian. Compared to the great European museums, it isn't much. But nevertheless there were some nice pieces and it seemed to have one or sometimes two paintings of most of the famous Europeans. One which surprised me was a very atypical Modigliani: the figure was fat.

After the museum, I took a walk in the park across the street—nice tropical trees—until it was time to head for the airport. The flight was on time at 18:35 and was not too full. I had three seats to myself and so managed to get some sleep.