

December 20, 2019

Brazil: Visits to Four (4) Tourist Railways, Each Featuring Steam-Hauled Service

Summary

In early December, 2019, visits were made to four Brazilian tourist railways, each of which features steam-hauled service.

Map



Above: Locations of São Paulo Guarulhos airport as well as each tourist railway visited in December, 2019 are depicted. Map source: Google maps.

Associação Brasileira de Preservação Ferroviária (ABPF)

ABPF or, Brazilian Railway Preservation Association, operates several tourist railways in Brazil, among them three of the four tourist railroads visited in December, 2019. Although technically headquartered in Campinas - State of São Paulo (SP), much of the ABPF day-to-day operations are managed out of Cruzeiro – SP, site of the ABPF steam shop.

Estrada de Ferro Minas-Rio

ABPF operate the “Trem das Águas” at São Lourenço – State of Minas Gerais (MG) and the “Trem da Serra da Mantiqueira” at Passa Quatro – MG. ABPF repair operations are maintained at Cruzeiro – SP. These three locations were all once part of the meter gauge Estrada de Ferro Minas-Rio (Minas-Rio Railway), which was built in 1884 between Cruzeiro – SP and Três Corações – MG.

Similar to the former Denver & Rio Grande Western Railway narrow gauge operations in Colorado and New Mexico, USA, much of the former Minas-Rio railway has long since been abandoned. Not unlike the Durango & Silverton – and – the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroads, several small sections of the former Minas-Rio railway remain intact, hosting tourist railway operations.

Trem das Águas: São Lourenço - Soledade de Minas, State of Minas Gerais (MG)

Distance: 10 kilometers (6 miles)

ABPF operate Trem das Águas or “Water Train” so named to credit the many water-related spas in the communities of São Lourenço, Cambuquira and Caxambu. Locomotives operate smokebox-first (chimney-first) northbound, then run-around the train at Soledade de Minas, returning to São Lourenço tender-first.



Above: The São Lourenço railway station. Note: Plinthed on the station platform is Manuela 8, 0-4-0T, 80 cm gauge. This locomotive's builder's plate: Krauss 2092 / 1889. Other sources list this locomotive as Krauss 2761 or 2762 / 1892.



Above, left: Looking directly west from the São Lourenço railway station. Above, right: The view, looking east toward the São Lourenço railway station from the plaza. Just out of view to the left is Pousada Santo Antônio. Note the horse-drawn carriage, one of many such carriages which regularly transport tourists to and from the larger hotels in the city center of São Lourenço. November 30, 2019.



Above: Upon my arrival in São Lourenço on the afternoon of Friday, November 29, 2019, Central 1424 was out in the sun, simmering, ready for the following day's operations. Such low light is often rather difficult to achieve at most Brazilian tourist railways. With locations closer to the equator than similar sites in the Northern Hemisphere, normal train operations usually occur during midday, when the sun is high.



Above: On the platform of the São Lourenço railway station, a band consisting of four (4) acoustic guitars, three (3) accordions and one (1) triangle performed for waiting passengers. November 30, 2019.

Prior to boarding at São Lourenço, local cheese, wine and craft vendors sold their wares to passengers waiting for the train's departure.



Above: Central 1424 with its train preparing to depart the São Lourenço station. Note the strings of lights attached to the locomotive's hand rails for the Holiday Season. November 30, 2019.



Above: Central 1424 departing São Lourenço – MG. November 30, 2019.

The route between São Lourenço and Soledade de Minas roughly follows the course of Rio Verde, or “Green River.”



Above: Between São Lourenço and Soledade de Minas, Central 1424 approaches the small station at Parada Ramon - MG. November 30, 2019.



Above and below: Central 1424 as seen from the adjacent highway between São Lourenço and Soledade de Minas – MG. November 30, 2019.



Above: Central 1424 is seen arriving at Soledade de Minas – MG. November 30, 2019.

Once upon a time, Soledade de Minas – MG was an important railway junction, where the Minas-Rio Railway crossed and interchanged with the Sapucahy Railway.



Above, left: At Soledade de Minas, once passengers have disembarked, the train is pulled forward and the locomotive uncoupled. Above, right: Next, the locomotive runs around the train and re-couples to the back end, prepared to operate tender-first back to São Lourenço. November 30, 2019.

Steam Locomotives at ABPF São Lourenço – MG:

Central 1424, 2-8-2 (BLW 59712 / 1927), originally Estrada de Ferro Central do Brazil. Serviceable.

RMV 332 4-6-2 (BLW 58852 / 1925), wood-burner, originally Oeste de Minas. Not currently serviceable.



Above: RMV 332 4-6-2 (BLW 58852 / 1925), wood-burner, is stored, not currently serviceable, at the São Lourenço – MG shed. November 30, 2019.

Trem da Serra da Mantiqueira: Passa Quatro - Estação Coronel Fulgêncio, State of Minas Gerais (MG)
 Distance: 10 kilometers (6 miles)



Above: Leopoldina 327 prepares to depart Passa Quatro – MG. December 1, 2019.

During the period 1997 – 2001, ABPF operated steam-powered tourist trains between Cruzeiro - SP and Passa Quatro - MG. A severe landslide in 2001 just south of the summit tunnel between Passa Quatro and Cruzeiro severed the southern-most portion of this line.

Since 2001, service between Cruzeiro and the summit, Estação Coronel Fulgêncio, has been discontinued. Plans are now in place to investigate re-opening this section of the railway line, which includes a tunnel at the summit.

Since 2004, steam-powered trains operate between Passa Quatro and Estação Coronel Fulgêncio. Locomotives operate smokebox-first (chimney-first) between Passa Quatro and Estação Coronel Fulgêncio. At Estação Coronel Fulgêncio, the locomotive runs around the train, then returns to Passa Quatro tender-first.

On the occasion of my visit, an extra “Santa Train” was operated on the evening of Saturday, November 30, 2019. At 6:00 PM, Leopoldina 327 powered a single passenger car loaded with children from Passa Quatro. The train operated approximately 1 kilometer toward the edge of town, then backed-up to the Passa Quatro station. During this ride, the children, wearing red Santa Claus hats, sang Christmas carols. Bruno and I rode in the rear vestibule of the passenger car. Along the way, throngs of townspeople lined the right-of-way, greeting the train, which had been decorated with lights for the occasion.

Leopoldina 327, 4-6-2 (Beyer Peacock 6509 / 1928), meter gauge, wood burner



Above: Leopoldina 327 is seen southbound on the eastern outskirts of Passa Quatro – MG. December 1, 2019.



Above and below: Leopoldina 327 is seen operating through the countryside between Passa Quatro and Estação Coronel Fulgêncio – MG. December 1, 2019.



Trem de Guararema: Guararema - Luís Carlos, State of São Paulo (SP)

Distance: 6.5 kilometers (4 miles)

The following insights are courtesy of Bruno Sanches:

This was the original “Central do Brasil” main line. The main line runs from Rio de Janeiro to São Paulo. In the 1960s, they built a new line from São Jose dos Campos to São Paulo. This section that goes through Guararema was lowered to a branch line.

It closed in the 1990s, but in 1994 (not sure the exact year) a bridge at São Jose dos Campos collapsed with an iron ore train over it, so they did an emergency refurbishment of the branch line and re-opened it for heavy traffic for some months while a new bridge was built. As soon as the bridge was ready, they abandoned the branch.

Somewhere in the 2000s, MRS Logística re-opened the section from Mogi das Cruzes to Jacareí, for carrying cellulose. In Mogi das Cruzes the line connects with CPTM, the Suburban railroad that provides commuter train for São Paulo and from there it splits to several places.

So, in Guararema, besides the steam, you should expect some freight train action (4 trains per day) and meetings between steam and freight.



Above: The Guararema railway station, point of departure for the steam-powered trains to Luís Carlos – SP. December 6, 2019.

Central 353, 4-6-2 (BLW 59736 / 1927), 3-cylinder, broad gauge, wood-burner. This locomotive was originally a coal-burner. Since supplies of coal are not readily available in Brazil, and wood fuel is plentiful, ABPF converted this locomotive's firebox to burn wood. Future plans include design and construction of a new tender with a new internal design for better wood storage.



Above: Central 353 is seen at the Guararema railway station, preparing to depart for Luís Carlos. Trains operate smokebox-first from Guararema to Luís Carlos, returning tender-first. December 6, 2019



Above: Tourist trains approaching the station at Luís Carlos are required to stop to allow the brakeman to throw a switch routing the tourist train into the siding, allowing passengers direct access to the station platform. December 7, 2019



Above: Once passengers have disembarked, the locomotive pulls away and runs-around the train. December 6, 2019.



Above: Having run-around its train, Central 353 slowly approaches the rear of the train, preparing to couple-up for the tender-first operation back to Guararema. December 7, 2019.



Above: Directly across the parking lot from the Luís Carlos railway station is the 4 · 6 · 2 Brew Pub. December 7, 2019.

Estrada de Ferro Campos do Jordão (EFCJ): Emilio Ribas - Abernèssia, State of São Paulo (SP)

Distance: 3.5 kilometers (2 miles)

Two steam locomotives are housed at the EFCJ shed in Campos do Jordão:

EFCJ 6, 0-6-0ST (H. K. Porter 8118 / 1947), meter gauge (out of service), wood-burner

EFCJ 8, 2-6-2T (Linke-Hofmann-Werke 3085 / 1927), ex-Companhia Paulista, meter gauge, wood-burner

Linke-Hofmann-Werke (LHW) locomotive details (thanks to Helmut Dahlhaus and Thomas Kautzor):

- List of preserved LHW locomotives: http://www.lokhersteller.de/lokbau/museum/pres_lhw.htm
- Another (the only other?) serviceable LHW locomotive: http://www.eisenbahn-museumsfahrzeuge.com/index.php/deutschland/staatsbahnfahrzeuge/dampflokomotiven/baur_eihe-3810/38-2460



Above: EFCJ 8, 2-6-2 at the Campos do Jordão shed. December 8, 2019.

The Porter locomotive arrived at EFCJ in 2004 where it worked until 2017. EFCJ 8 arrived in July, 2019, having formerly been in service in a park in the nearby town of Taubaté - SP. Today, the only serviceable steam locomotive is EFCJ 8, the LHW locomotive.

At the northern terminus of this railway, “Emilio Ribas,” the original station, now houses a railway museum.



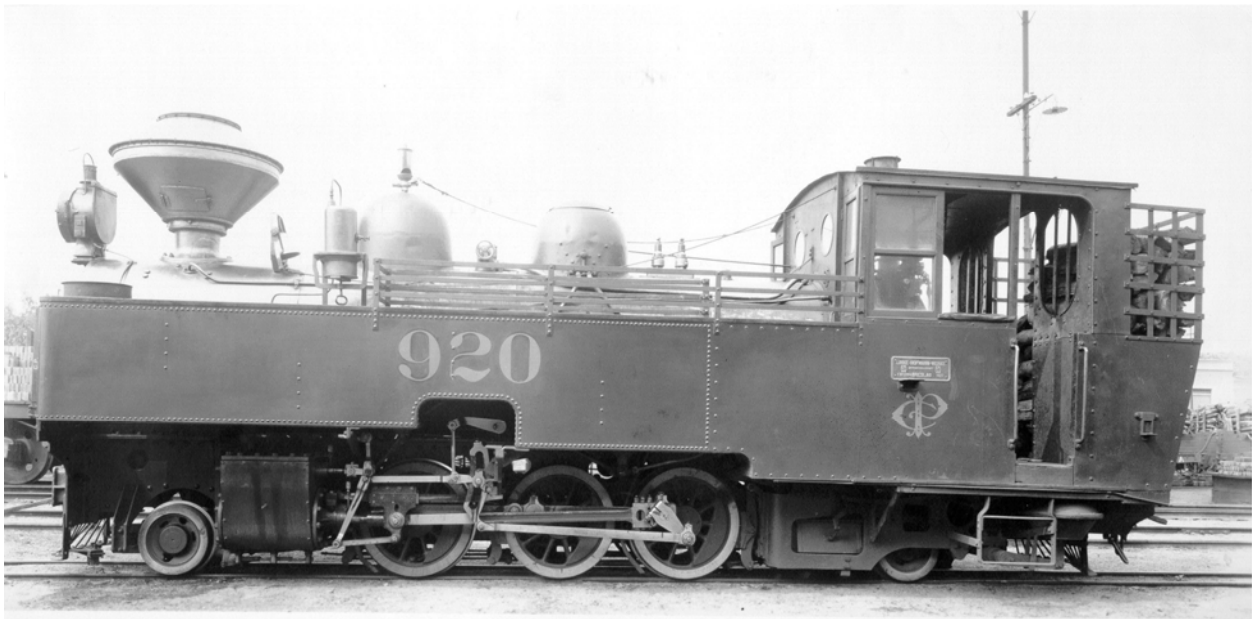
Above: EFCJ 8, 2-6-2T, powers the final trip of the day, Campos do Jordão, State of São Paulo, Brazil. At the throttle: Leandro Guidini. December 8, 2019.

Right: The LHW builder's plate on EFCJ 8. Note: When built in 1927, Breslau was in Germany. Following the end of World War II, Breslau was included within the re-defined borders of Poland. Since 1954, Breslau was re-named, “Wrocław.”

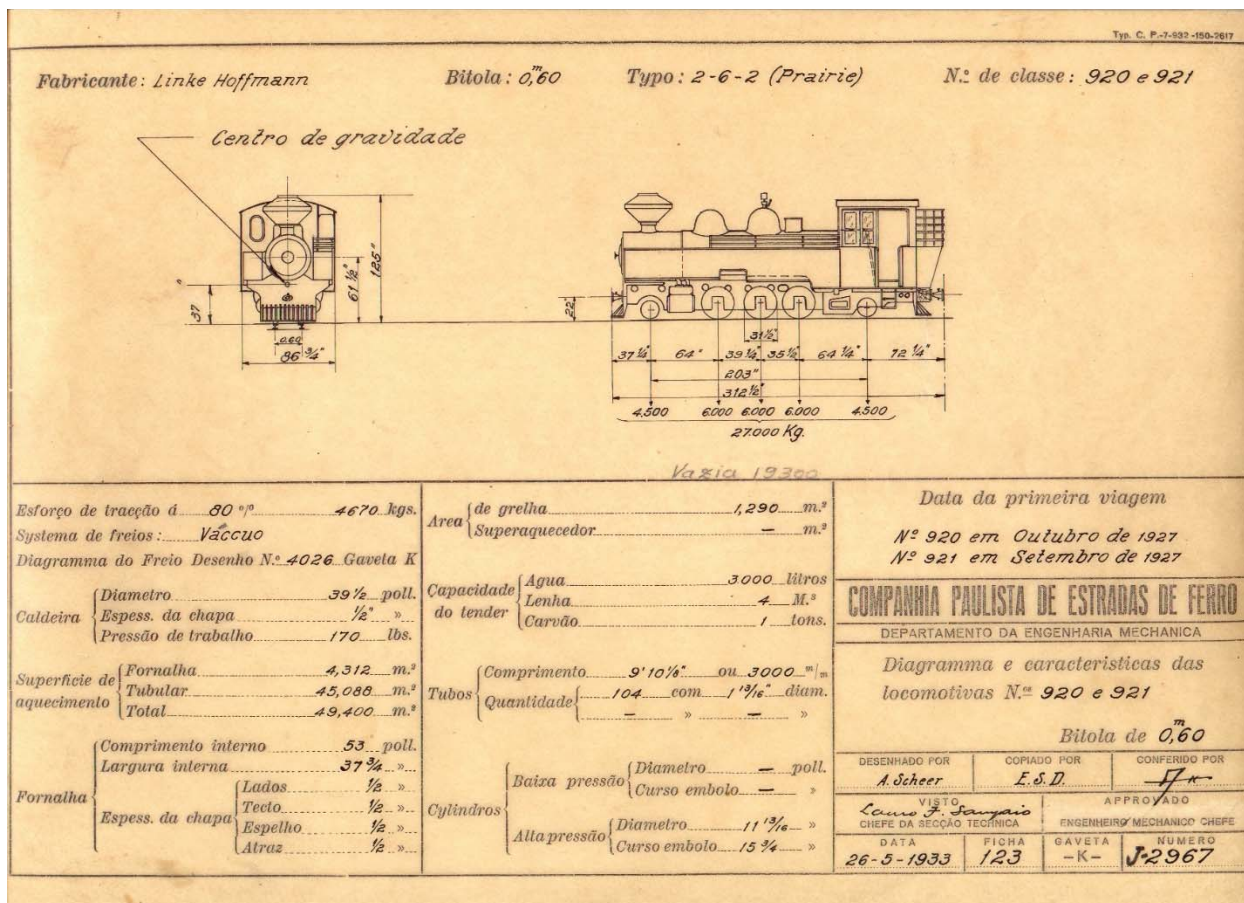




Above: Leandro Guidini at the throttle of EFCJ 8. December 7, 2019.



Above: A photo of EFCJ 8 as it appeared early in its career, courtesy of Leandro Guidini.



Above: Diagram of EFCJ 8, courtesy of Leandro Guidini.



Above: Two views of EFCJ A5, one of two trams which operate regularly at Estrada de Ferro Campos do Jordão. Note the Swiss-style architecture of many of the buildings in Campos do Jordão. December 8, 2019.



Above: EFCP tram A7 is seen southbound, just south of the northern terminus of Emilio Ribas. December 8, 2019.



Above: EFCL 6 in the shop at Campos do Jordão. December 8, 2019.

EFCL 6 is nominally a locomotive built by H. K. Porter. That said, research performed by Thor Windbergs suggests that the HK Porter locomotive with this builder's number was fireless. We believe this locomotive is the result of many parts having been swapped from similar locomotives during its years working at Brazilian sugar mills. EFCL 6 was last steamed in 2015.

ABPF Steam Shop: Cruzeiro - State of São Paulo (SP)

In Cruzeiro – SP, ABPF maintain a shop and yard facility where locomotives, passenger cars and other equipment are temporarily stored and repaired.



Above, left: RMV 522, 2-8-2 (ALCO Schenectady 66747 / 1926), meter gauge, under repair at Cruzeiro. Above, right: RFFSA 207, 4-6-2 (Hartmann 4638 / 1925), meter gauge, formerly located at Rio Claro – SP. In the distance: The Cruzeiro railway station. Both: December 1, 2019.



Above, left: ABPF 4, 0-4-OST (ALCO 6862 / 1932). Above, right: Leopoldina 221, 2-8-0 (Robert Stephenson 3852 / 1914) (right) – and – Leopoldina 103, 0-6-0 (North British Locomotive Works 25914 / 1946) (left). Both: December 1, 2019.



Above: These two steam locomotives, 167 and 166, are the Sentinels, which worked until rather recently at the Maxion plant in Cruzeiro – SP. December 1, 2019.

Travel Considerations

Currency

The “real” is the official currency of Brazil. It is subdivided into 100 centavos. For this trip:

BRL 4.26 = USD 1.00

BRL 1.00 = USD 0.23

ATMs are widely available, including at São Paulo Guarulhos Airport. In Brazil ATMs are called "caixa eletrônico" or "banco 24 horas." Arriving visitors should consider acquiring some local currency, including cash needed for tolls. See the following section, “Auto Rental:”

Air Travel

Travel from California to Brazil was arranged via United Airlines, who offer service to São Paulo Guarulhos Airport (GRU) via connections in Houston (IAH), Chicago (ORD) and Newark (EWR). My itinerary featured a connection in Houston.

Local Transportation, including Auto Rental

For this visit, rental cars were twice (on two consecutive weekends) rented from Alamo at São Paulo Guarulhos Airport. The Alamo / National / Enterprise car rental / return facility is located on floor 6 of the newer parking garage located adjacent to Terminal 3.

Tolls: Visitors planning to rent a car should be aware that the main highway between São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, used to access each of the tourist railways visited on this trip, is a toll road. Tolls are not expensive, but payable only with cash. See the previous section, “Currency.”

Navigation: For this trip, the street maps of Brazil were purchased and downloaded to a Garmin GPS device. With very few, minor exceptions, the Garmin GPS worked well. Recommended.

Speed Traps and Speed Bumps:

Most major highways in Brazil are well paved and well maintained. Speed limits through rural areas are usually 80 kilometers per hour (50 mph).

Drivers must be on the constant lookout for speed traps, however, usually located near the city limits or near bus stops and pedestrian crossings. These speed traps are equipped with radar and cameras which automatically detect vehicles exceeding the speed limits.



Accommodations: São Lourenço – MG: Pousada Santo Antônio

São Lourenço – MG is a destination for many Brazilian tourists. As such, this city features many hotels, some of which are upscale (and expensive).

Conveniently located directly across the plaza from the São Lourenço railway station, Pousada Santo Antônio offers reasonable rates; comfortable, air-conditioned rooms; an enclosed, gated parking area; Wi-Fi Internet access and breakfast.



Above, left: The exterior of Pousada Santo Antônio. Above, right: The view of the patio from my room. November 30, 2019.



Above, left: Hot water for the shower at Pousada Santo Antônio is supplied via an electric heating element located in the shower head. Above, right: The small restaurant across the street from Pousada Santo Antônio where I enjoyed dinner one evening and a beer the following day. November 30, 2019.

URL: <http://www.pousadasantoantonio-mg.com.br/novo/>

Accommodations: Passa Quatro – MG: Hotel Pousada São Rafael

Like São Lourenço, Passa Quatro – MG is a destination for many Brazilian tourists. Like São Lourenço, several large, upscale (and expensive) hotels can be found here.

Hotel Pousada São Rafael is conveniently located near the center of Passa Quatro, within easy walking distance of the Passa Quatro railway station. Rooms are clean, comfortable and air-conditioned. Reasonable room rates include an enclosed parking area, Wi-Fi Internet access and breakfast.



Above: The exterior of Hotel Pousada São Rafael, Passa Quatro – MG. December 1, 2019.

URL: <http://www.hotelpousadasaorafael.com.br/>

Accommodations: Cruzeiro – SP: Hotel Embaixador

In Cruzeiro, Bruno recommended Hotel Embaixador, where I stayed when last visiting Cruzeiro in 2010. Conveniently located in the city center, this multi-story hotel features clean, comfortable, air-conditioned rooms; gated, enclosed off-street parking; Wi-Fi Internet access and breakfast. Recommended.

Accommodations: Jacareí – SP: Hotel Ibis Jacareí

When visiting Trem de Guararema, Bruno recommended one of two Ibis Hotels: Jacareí or Mogi das Cruzes. Since the Ibis Hotel in Mogi das Cruzes was, on the occasion of my visit, fully booked, a room for two nights was booked at the Ibis Jacareí.

This modern hotel offers reasonable rates; safe, clean, air-conditioned accommodations; gated underground parking; Wi-Fi Internet access and breakfast. Recommended.

URL: <https://all.accor.com/hotel/8637/index.en.shtml>

Accommodations: Campos do Jordão: Pousada Toca das Bromélias

Situated 5,341 feet (1,628 meters) above sea level, Campos do Jordão is the highest city in Brazil.

Exceeding both São Lourenço and Passa Quatro, Campos do Jordão – SP is a destination for many Brazilian tourists. As such, this city features perhaps a hundred or more hotels and pousadas, some of which are upscale (and expensive).

For my visit, many hotel websites were explored. Some hotels were expensive. Others were fully booked. In the end, I settled for Pousada Toca das Bromélias, located just a couple of blocks from the Estrada de Ferro Campos do Jordão terminus, railway station and shed.

This property offers basic accommodations; reasonable rates; an enclosed, gated parking area; Wi-Fi Internet access and breakfast. The first room I was offered did not feature a functioning lock. The second room had no windows! Both rooms were small, and neither room included a desk. Thankfully, the breakfast area, with many tables and chairs, seemed to be open to guests 24/7, so when a work area was needed, this was performed in the breakfast room.

Although rooms at Pousada Toca das Bromélias are not air-conditioned, the high elevation of Campos do Jordão meant daytime temperatures were mild. Overnight temperatures were downright cool.

Since this pousada is located so close to the railway terminus and shop area, I was able to walk to both the railway shop area and the railway line to photograph the trains.

URL: <http://tocadasbromelias.com.br/>

Meals

Most hotels and pousadas featured a breakfast included in the price of the room. Breakfasts ranged from a nice selection of bread, cakes, fresh fruit and coffee – to breakfasts featuring hot items, including scrambled eggs and hot sausages – to a breakfast, at Pousada Santo Antonio in São Lourenço - MG, featuring 37! varieties of bread and cakes:



Above: The breakfast buffet at Pousada Santo Antonio, São Lourenço – MG. November 30, 2019.

Lunch and dinner were often enjoyed either at local restaurants or, for some dinners, at the hotel.

Health and Safety

The primary purpose of this trip to Brazil was to assist our customer, Vale's Estrada de Ferro Vitória a Minas (Vitória - Minas Railway), with installation of some special track components.

In addition to the usual steel-toe boots, safety vest, hard hat and safety glasses, two days before departure from USA, we were advised as follows: "It was not yet mentioned, but I know that in these regions customers sometimes demand prove of yellow fever vaccine. In any case, it would be useful for you personally to have it, to be safe."

"Vale requested us to bring our own full leg protections kits, against snake attacks, but the customer will supply these items for us for 2 days, since it is not very common for suppliers to have."

Upon receiving the advice regarding yellow fever, a series of telephone calls eventually resulted in a recommendation to visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) website, which included comprehensive recommendations regarding health precautions to be observed when traveling to many countries. The CDC website also included a handy reference, with maps, depicting the closest source in USA of yellow fever vaccine. An appointment to receive the yellow fever vaccine was made for later the same day.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention => Travelers Health:

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list>

Prior to receiving the vaccine, together with several other individuals planning overseas travel, we were required to participate in a video conference call with a doctor, who was working remotely from Oregon, USA. In addition to reviewing health risks and preventative measures to be taken, this doctor briefly reviewed with each participant health risks specific to the countries they planned to visit. The doctor recommended each traveler acquire the following medications, dietary supplements and repellents:

- Ciprofloxacin Hydrochloride ("Cipro"), prescription required, for control of diarrhea, if needed
- Imodium, for control of diarrhea, if needed
- Insect repellent containing N, N-Diethyl-meta-toluamide ("DEET")
- Probiotic dietary supplement
- Hand sanitizer containing at least 90% alcohol

Additional recommendations included: Eat fruit one can peel, avoid street food, avoid food not thoroughly cooked, avoid cooked food no longer hot, avoid food on which flies have been standing, etc. Visitors should be advised to drink only bottled water or filtered water.

From July 11, 2016, the World Health Organization regards the vaccine against yellow fever to be valid for the duration of one's life. Because I had received a vaccine against yellow fever in 1981, I was not required to receive another dose of the yellow fever vaccine in preparation for this trip. A prescription for "Cipro" was tendered and filled. Other recommended dietary supplements, insect repellent, etc. were purchased.

During the recent 10-day visit to Brazil, no health-related problems were encountered.

Brazil: Additional Tourist Railways Featuring Steam-hauled Service

Additional tourist railways exist in Brazil, many managed by ABPF: <http://www.abpf.com.br/inicio/>

Prospective visitors are encouraged to consider any of these sites for a visit to Brazil.