

## A Brazilian and His Bike Spend 3.5 Years Visiting 28 Countries in 5 Continents

Contributed by Isaura Daniel  
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Brazilian architect Argus Caruso Saturnino, 31 years of age, has already travelled to Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. What Argus did - travel to the Arab countries - is done by thousands of other Brazilians every year.

But the architect did not travel in the same way as most Brazilians do. He travelled the four countries on a bicycle, over a period of about five months. He visited dozens of cities. Argus does not know how many. He has lost count.

The architect saw historic places, pedaled through deserts, slept in Arab family homes, made friends among the Bedouins and even kissed the Sphinx, the ancient Egyptian sculpture, with the head of a human and the body of a lion.

"Here we have a distorted image of these countries," stated Argus, referring to the news about wars in the Arab world that normally reach the Brazilians.

The trip to the four Arab nations, in reality, was part of a much greater project. The architect decided to pedal around the world to bring to Brazil information that most of the newspapers do not publish about other countries.

Argus cycled around the world for three and a half years, between 2001 and 2005, and visited 28 countries. While he travelled, he published on a website reports about the geography, history and daily life of the sites he visited.

Argus' stories were read and discussed by children and youths in schools all around Brazil and in the countries he visited. "I decided to join adventure and education," he explained. Around 3,000 schools used the architect's material to show students what the world is like beyond the Brazilian frontiers.

A large part of the countries chosen by the architect for his trip are not known in Brazil, as is the case of Cambodia, Nepal, Iran, Slovenia and Croatia. Some stretches of the trip, like when there was need to cross the ocean, were made by aircraft. Others were on buses. But most of it was by bicycle. Argus also pedaled around countries like Australia, India, Greece, Kenya, East Timor, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand.

The architect, who is from the southeastern Brazilian state of Minas Gerais, left the city of Cordisburgo, in the same state, and from there went to Bolivia and Peru. He then flew to Australia and started covering ground. The trip included cities in South America, Asia, Africa, Europe and Oceania. The trip was paid for by sponsors and by the cyclist himself.

From the Arab world, the greatest content that Argus brought in his baggage, according to him, was hospitality. In Jordan, for example, one day at the end of Ramadan, when the Muslims fast during the day for a whole month, and have feasts to celebrate the end, Argus was invited by a Bedouin who owned a grocery store to eat at his house.

As he knew about the trading talent of the Arabs, he thought that he would have to pay for the meal. But he was surprised. He not only went to the party, but he also spent another four days at the family home.

"On the first day I only met the men of the family. On the second day I met the mother on the third the daughters and on the fourth I was already celebrating with them, buying presents for the children," he reports.

Bedouins are Arabs who live in tents in desert region and move constantly. In the past they were goat farmers, but now many have conventional trade activities. On the site on which Argus wrote about his trip there are all kinds of experiences he lived in the Arab world, from the night he spent at the top of a mountain, in the city of Latakia, in Syria, to his participation in a Christian wedding, in the same country.

"The architecture of the church is a little different, but the ceremony is very similar to those of the West. The greatest difference was at the end. When the priest ends the ceremony, all the women scream. Nobody could explain why. Some said it was a scream of glee, others of envy, greeting, suffocation, and so on..." wrote Argus.

Cultural differences are clear in several of the architect's reports about his visit to Syria. "Everybody here complains about the same thing: getting married is very expensive! To get married, the man must pay the woman approximately US\$ 20,000. They went mad when I told them that in Brazil it was free. But to avoid masculine migration to my country, I always made it clear that we do not pay at the time, but later, depending on the woman, it is easy to go broke."

In Egypt, for example, Argus saw historic views and was also amid poor communities in the Sinai, who despite their limited economic conditions received the architect with what they had best to offer. "Many stared at me curiously while I brushed my teeth. The toothbrush was a novelty to many."

Argus was occasionally received by families that only spoke Arabic, even though he could only understand a word or two in the language. The cyclist speaks English, Spanish and a little Italian and French.

In his first year, Argus travelled accompanied by a German, but later, when he was in the Arab countries, he walked around alone. Argus covered around 1,000 kilometers a month. He stayed at family homes, hotels or in his tent.

Before travelling by bicycle, in 2000 the architect repeated, on a sailboat, for a period of four and a half months, the route followed by Pedro Álvares Cabral on the trip in which he discovered Brazil.

It was from there, incidentally, that the idea of travelling around the world by bicycle arose. "After that trip I started giving talks at schools and the need for education called my attention, as children went mad at the idea of adventure," he explained.

The reports of Argus' bicycle trips may be read on his site [www.pedalandoeducando.com.br](http://www.pedalandoeducando.com.br).

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