November 30. Our last day! We needed to be ready for pick-up at 2:30 PM. Favio arranged for a guide, Fernando, to meet us at Praia Sueste (so ES che) to take us out to the turtle feeding area. Again, all in Portuguese. However, by now, Judy and I understood well; being totally in a Portuguese-speaking environment rubs off after a while.

Licensed guides can go places that are restricted to people without guides. We had on life vests and he had a life preserver with him. He helped us get our fins on and we set out, with Judy and me holding on to a rope attached to the life preserver and Fernando guiding us both along.

It took a while to get out to the feeding ground, but then suddenly, there were the turtles! Usually, we saw individuals, but occasionally two or three. These were green turtles. Their shells were between 24 and 30 inches across, somewhat larger front to back. Gentle creatures. One swam right under us, nearly within arm’s reach. We probably saw between one and two dozen turtles.

Next, Fernando led us past a boulder field with schools of exotic fish swimming by, through, under, and around us. Again, I marveled at their incandescence. There was also a moray eel, multi-striped, about two feet long that was wriggling between the boulders below us.

We came out after about an hour, somewhat tired but certainly exhilarated and delighted with the experience. What a wonderful last day’s experience! For me, there was also the sense of accomplishment for having conquered my tentativeness and ineptness at snorkeling and swimming with fins.

We returned to our pousada by bus. By this time, we knew all of the bus drivers and were greeted with one of those million-dollar smiles and an “Ola!” as we got on. We cleaned up and finished packing but for our wet stuff in time to take a bus back to our favored per-kilo place, had lunch and returned again. We were ready in plenty of time for our pick-up.

The plane was late. We lost an hour that we hoped to use to browse for English lessons for Helena at the airport in Rio. No such luck. We had to grab our suitcases and switch from the domestic to the international terminal with almost no time to spare. Long walk between terminals with two carts of luggage, but we made it.
The flights went Fernando to Recife to Rio to Atlanta to Denver. The Rio/Atlanta leg was nine hours! We both slept for about six of those. After our last two days, we were very tired and sleeping came easily.

Total time from the pick-up at the pousada to arrival at our home in Denver was 31 hours. We were sad to leave Fernando just when we felt we were getting the hang of things, although it felt good to be home. Unfortunately, we both picked up colds that blossomed on our way home; perhaps the flushing by the saltwater those last two days was more than the resistance in our system’s could bear. We had fended off exposure to colds from our friends, salespeople, people on the street and on the buses, but we passed some threshold of exertion and exposure over those last few days.

We have come to realize that vacations such as this one are not for everyone. (I can hear my father in my head saying, “Mishega!”) We have had the same realization about our travels in China. Local native hotels, challenging food, challenging language barriers (I bargain in Chinese.), are just not everyone’s cup of tea. However, the rewards for all of the discomfort are worth it to us. The people we meet with the help our imperfect language skills enrich our lives and expand our perspective about the world…and, oh, the places we have been!

Photos. Only one photo at Sueste that last day, so these are mostly a reprise.