

The Hike

Weekends were a welcome break from training. Getting squashed, thrown, strangled and arm barred twice daily by the international squad on the Gracie Barra mats plus the physical training with Largarto took its toll.

Saturday and Sunday's were beach days bringing people from the deepest parts of the city carrying their surf boards and towels to the coast.

I had a tattoo on my shoulder of the Gracie Barra logo, the cartoon Tasmanian devil.

I was told that displaying such a 'tribal' tattoo could incite hate and possible violence from rival gyms.

I was young and daft, so I wore a vest on the beach.

I often got looks both bemused and concerned but fortunately no direct challenges.



Years later Disney would threaten Gracie Barra with a trademark lawsuit forcing them to stop using the image and to paint over the mural in the gym.

For those new to the sport of BJJ its worth noting that the No-Gi uniform of long board shorts and rash guards came from the surfers attire. Surfers who often fought on the beach over access to the best surfing areas. Jiu-Jitsu branded No-Gi attire wasn't a concept. To buy shorts and rash guard you had to visit a surf shop. There was such shop in Barra which had a small clothing section upstairs with surf wear and a Gi section.

During one of these weekends Ben had arranged for us to hike the Pedra De Gavea.

From Wikipedia;

***Pedra da Gávea** is a monolithic mountain in Tijuca Forest, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Composed of granite and gneiss, its elevation is 844 meters (2,769 ft), making it one of the highest mountains in the world that ends directly in the ocean.*



[2] Trails on the mountain were opened up by the local farming population in the early 1800s.



The hike up was a mix of walking up the narrow winding trail through the jungle and scrambling up sloping granite faced waterfalls.

The first time I hiked up this rock we were with Carlos Gracie Junior.

It was a humbling experience to be in his company, I found myself hanging off every word he said, whether in English or Portuguese (I still hardly understood Portuguese)

Early one morning we met in the car park at the bottom of the mountain.

After a quick warning to “keep up” we were off.

Carlos and his friend hiked this rock every weekend, despite being older than Largarto & I, they always left us in their dust.

It was a great effort to keep up as getting stranded on a strange mountain in shorts and vest, wasn't on my bucket list, also it was best to keep eyes on the trail as it was slippery and covered in roots and the route often split in different directions.

We were about half way up with Carlos & his friend way in front. I was at the rear of the group with Largarto in the middle about 30 yards in front of me.

It took a moment to realize that the noise I could hear was pure panic.

Looking up from the trail I saw Largarto sprinting full speed towards me shouting rapidly in Portuguese. Repeating the same word over and over.

I didn't need to ask any questions.

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We came to a breathless halt a little distance down the track, where I discovered the word being uttered by Largarto as he sped towards me, was 'Jararaca'. There was a snake on the trail.

Carlos had passed over it without realizing, it was Carlos' mate who saw what it was as he ran over it. He had stopped and shouted at Largarto to stop.

Carlos' mate with stick in hand, then calmly proceeded to 'shoo' the brown colored snake off the trail. 'Jararaca' obviously decided to move away from the prodding stick by sliding down the trail..... towards Largarto. That's what caused him to turn and sprint towards me.

Once we were sure it had slithered off, Largarto sprinted past and I long jumped a good 7-8 feet passed the spot. Pretty sure I was flapping my arms as I sailed over the last known location of the beast.

The rest of the journey was spent with me very being highly vigilant going both up and down the trail.

The view from the top is staggering.



A tinge of regret hits me as I write this as its another epic moment in my life where I didn't have a camera.

We sat in silence, catching our breath whilst admiring the view.

“Was it poisonous?” I asked,

“Yes”

“If bitten you'd likely be dead before you got to the hospital”

That was the last time I hiked the Pedra De Gavea.

Jararaca is the local term for the [Bothrops Jararaca](#), a species of highly venomous Pit Viper.

