



Organization For  
Computational Neurosciences

Member Newsletter | Oct 2023 | Volume 7 No.1

- Looking back at CNS\*2023 in Leipzig
- CNS\*2024 will be in Natal, Brazil, during July 20-24
- Inviting everyone to join OCNS Board of Directors
- Messages from travel awardees
- And other messages



Organization for  
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Contact us if you have comments or information to include in the newsletter [newsletter@cnsorg.org](mailto:newsletter@cnsorg.org)

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# CNS meeting went back to Europe in 2023

OCNS, Inc is a US non-profit, 501(c)(3) serving organization supporting the Computational Neuroscience community internationally.

We seek sponsorship from corporate and philanthropic organizations for support of student travel and registration to the annual meeting, student awards, and hosting of topical workshops. For more information about how you can contribute, please email [sponsorship@cnsorg.org](mailto:sponsorship@cnsorg.org)

CNS\*2023 took place from Saturday to Wednesday (July 15-19, 2023) in Leipzig, Germany. It was held at the “Kongreßhalle am Zoo”, a beautiful historic building right next to the lovely zoo of Leipzig and within walking distance of the city center, now housing a modern convention center.



The local organizing committee was chaired by Thomas R. Knösche from the Max Planck Institute of Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences (Leipzig, Germany), seconded by Fred Hamker (University of Chemnitz), Marc Schönwiesner (University of Leipzig), Jürgen Jost (Max Planck Institute for Mathematics in the Science, Leipzig), and Christian Döllner (Max Planck Institute of Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences, Leipzig), and effectively supported by a team of students and postdocs (Vincent Chien, Zijian Feng, Rosa Großmann, Ying Jing, Benjamin Kalloch, Martin Knösche, Antonia Knösche, Aaron Miller, Konstantin Weise, Torge Worbs, Klara Hamker, Luisa Löbel, Ariana Novak, Gerasimos Gerardos) as well as Julian Unger and his team of Conventus (Jena, Germany).



As usual for CNS meetings, the program comprised three parts. On the first day (Saturday, July 15), altogether 13 tutorials were held. This day was concluded by the inspiring opening keynote lecture by Netta Cohen (University of Leeds) on “The mind of a worm”, followed by the Welcome Reception, which gave everyone the opportunity to meet, with a beer or a glass of wine, old friends and new acquaintances. The next day (Sunday, July 16) started with the keynote lecture by Gesa Hartwigsen (University of Leipzig) on “Using non-invasive brain stimulation to modulate cognitive function”, which opened the main meeting. The main meeting continued until Tuesday (July 18) and consisted of multiple oral sessions (24 presentations, 4 of them featured), 3 poster sessions (together about 270 posters), and two more keynote talks by Alain Destexhe (Paris-Saclay Institute of Neuroscience, on “Mean-field approach to biophysical models of spiking networks”) and Demian Battaglia (Aix-Marseille University, on “Function follows Dynamics: controlling system states to modify information processing”). Monday evening (July 17), a conference dinner was served at the historic “Ratskeller” in Leipzig’s New City Hall. Finally, starting on Tuesday (July 18, mixed day) and lasting throughout the last day of the event (Wednesday, July 19), 13 different workshops organized by participants took place. Importantly, on Tuesday (July 18), the annual Members Meeting of the OCNS (open to all) was held, where important organizational and financial issues of the society were presented and discussed. Finally, last but not least, in the evening of July 18, the traditional CNS party took place in the vaults of the “Moritzbastei”, a student location in the former city fortification.

## OCNS Newsletter

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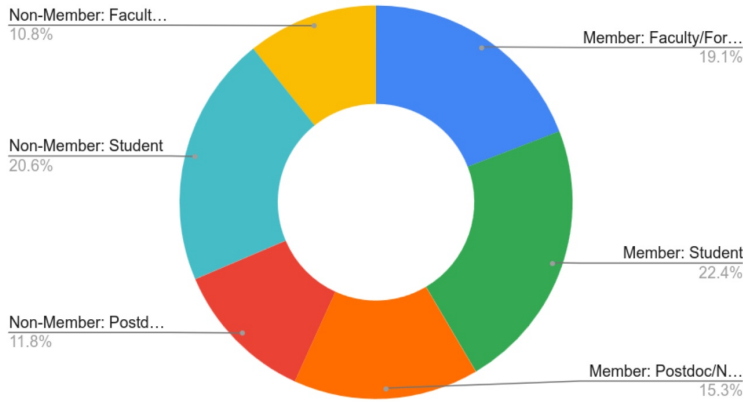
<https://ocns.memberclicks.net/cns-2023-photo-album>

# CNS\* 2023 Participant Statistics

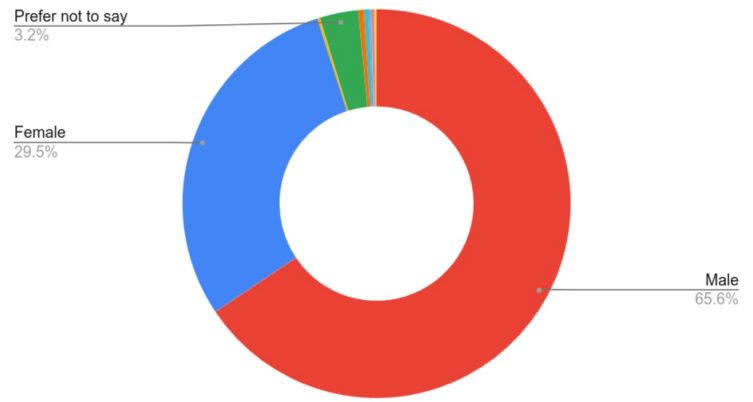
Shailesh Appukutan, Postdoctoral Researcher, Centre National de La Recherche Scientifique, Gif-Sur-Yvette, France; OCNS Website/Infrastructure Manager

The conference was attended by approximately 470 participants, originating from numerous countries, the largest contingents stemming from Germany (as the host country), USA, United Kingdom, France, Spain, and Switzerland.

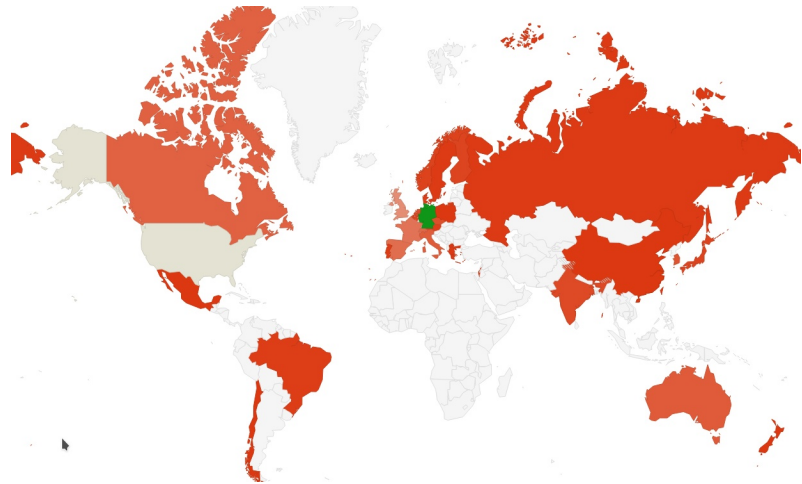
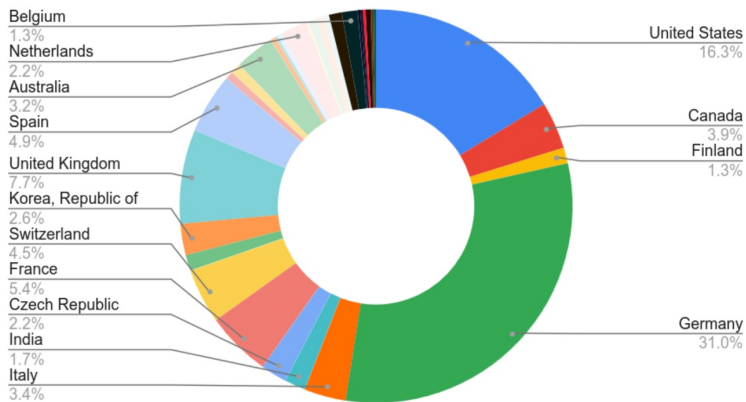
### CNS 2023 - Distribution By Category



### CNS 2023 - Distribution By Gender

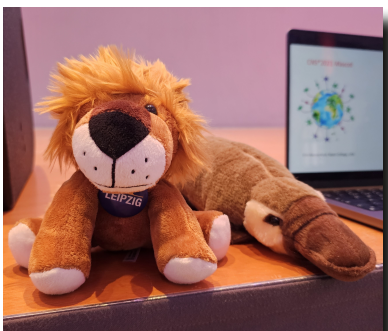


### CNS 2023 - Distribution By Country



## Program Committee Summary for CNS\* 2023

The Program Committee received a total of 296 submissions (150 more than last year); of these 112 chose "oral preferred". No submissions were rejected this year. 4 featured orals and 20 orals were chosen based on reviewers' comments, diversity of contributions, and session topics. There were 37 late breaking poster submissions.



CNS mascot for Leipzig:  
"Johann Sebastien".



Local organizer Thomas Knösche  
with all CNS mascots.

# A welcome message from the OCNS President

Thomas Nowotny, *Professor of Informatics*, University of Sussex, UK



Dear fellow members of OCNS,

It is my pleasure and privilege to write a few words of welcome in this edition of the OCNS newsletter. As we enter a new conference cycle for CNS\*2024 in Natal – the first one I will experience as President – I feel it is a good time to reflect on what

has happened with CNS over the last few years.

When the COVID19 pandemic hit in early 2020, we discovered that we can organize conferences entirely online, and CNS\*2020 and CNS\*2021 were very successful examples. There are undoubtedly benefits. Participation depends less on lab budgets and is hence more inclusive across geographic regions and career stages. Not needing to travel meant scientists with other responsibilities could participate more easily, and we should not underestimate the positive impacts in terms of a reduced carbon footprint. However, nobody I have spoken to expressed the view that online conferences could fully replace the experience of an in-person event, in particular with respect to social interactions, suitably focused minds and invaluable community building.

So, we did return to in-person meetings in CNS\*2022 Melbourne and CNS\*2023 Leipzig. Both were also very successful with a great vibe of an alive community. But the lessons from the COVID years are not forgotten and new hybrid solutions are being explored. Online satellite tutorials, and bringing in additional speakers into workshops over Zoom are already a reality. As we are preparing to come to Latin America for the first time in OCNS history, we continue exploring further how we can combine the best of both worlds.

Another topic on my mind is equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI). I am proud that OCNS has always fostered EDI, even before this acronym was coined, by supporting early career

researchers, promoting gender balance and striving for equitable treatment of people regardless of origin and location. It is my distinct pleasure to welcome our new education, training and EDI chair, Eirini Mavritsaki, who has exciting plans for taking us even further. And I would like to encourage everybody, but especially members from underrepresented groups, to stand for election to our Board of Directors to get deeper involved. The 2023 call for nominations is still open.

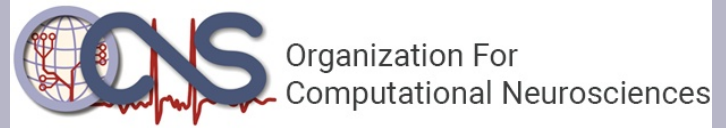
The fact that the vast majority of our single-track main conference talks are given by early career researchers has at times been criticized as lowering the “quality” of the CNS meeting. I strongly object to this. Simply having been around more years to hone presentation skills and amass an army of younger colleagues whose results we present doesn’t make us older folks’ science any higher quality. And our younger colleagues have demonstrated admirably, with extremely well-presented talks of excellent work at recent CNS meetings, just how far from the truth this sentiment is. I am proud that we support early career researchers this way and that we hear about the science from those at the coal face, who did most of the work.

Similarly, high rejection rates are sometimes seen as a hallmark of quality. I also do not agree with that. Rejecting half of the submissions makes no difference for the quality of the other half. Am I naive? Old fashioned? I strongly believe in CNS as a conference where we support our early career colleagues, and are inclusive; as long as the work meets the scientific standard of correctness and is relevant to Computational Neuroscience, everyone is truly welcome to join in.

I am looking forward to meeting many of you in Natal, which – with preparations well underway – is shaping up to be another excellent CNS adventure.

Sincerely yours,  
Thomas Nowotny  
(OCNS President)

## BECOME A SPONSOR OF CNS\* 2024



Every year, OCNS organizes an annual meeting, a popular and long-running event attracting researchers in computational neuroscience and bio-inspired AI, including organizers of other scientific events. With a number of attendees from around the world typically in excess of 500, this event provides a great opportunity for increased visibility.

This year, CNS 2024 will take place in Natal, Brazil (<https://www.cnsorg.org/cns-2024>).

By becoming a sponsor of this event, your company will enjoy international exposure and the opportunity to connect with an invaluable network of potential contacts.

Sponsors from previous years include **MathWorks, SpringerNature, BrainCorp, Neuralynx, CRC Press, Bernstein Network, eLIFE, Frontiers, INCF, NSF, MIT Press** and many others.

There are different ways to be a sponsor and possible levels of contributions – if you are interested or just want to find out more, please get in touch at [sponsorship@cnsorg.org](mailto:sponsorship@cnsorg.org)

## Quotes from CNS\* 2023 travel awardees

**Manon Monique Maria Berns** from **Denmark**: *"The OCNS travel grant has opened the opportunity for me to connect with various research in different disciplines of computational neuroscience, which has strongly broadened my view of the field."*

**Roberto Budzinski Neto** from **Canada**: *"Attending the CNS meeting was an amazing experience where I had the opportunity to learn from different perspectives about computational neuroscience. As a physicist studying neuroscience, this was of great importance, which was made possible by the travel award."*

**Alexa Noelle Aucoin** from **United States**: *"The CNS Travel Award afforded me the opportunity to present my dissertation research and receive invaluable feedback from the computational neuroscience community. The CNS\*2023 meeting in Leipzig strengthened my understanding of the current landscape of the field and helped to highlight new perspectives I can bring to interdisciplinary collaborations as an applied mathematician. My attendance would not have been possible without the support of the CNS Travel Award."*

**Marcus Ghosh** from **France**: *"The award gave me the opportunity to share my work with the wider community, and sparked helpful interactions both at and beyond the conference."*

**Alexandra Nicole Busch** from **Canada**: *"The CNS meeting this year was a valuable opportunity for me to learn about unique approaches and perspectives in computational neuroscience, present my work, and engage with other researchers in the field. Receiving the travel award helped make this trip possible."*

**Martí Monge i Asensio** from **Spain**: *"The travel award for the CNS meeting in Leipzig catalyzed my career. It facilitated vital connections, exposure to top-tier research, and enhanced my scientific trajectory significantly."*

**Shervin Safavi** from **Germany**: *"Attending CNS was a great opportunity for me to update myself about recent developments in several key domains of theoretical and computational neuroscience, and, more importantly, broaden my network and prepare myself to start a new journey as a principal investigator."*

# Changes to the OCNS Board of Directors

As a result of the 2022 member elections, new director positions were announced. You can see the full list at <https://ocns.memberclicks.net/board-of-directors>

## Newly elected Directors:



**Tatiana Kameneva**  
Swinburne University Of  
Technology, Hawthorn,  
Australia  
*Registrations Chair (deputy)*



**Julie Haas**  
Lehigh University,  
Bethlehem, United States  
*Program Chair*



**Claudio Mirasso**  
Universitat De Les Illes Balears,  
Palma De Mallorca, Spain  
*Social Media Chair (deputy)*



**Christopher French**  
University Of Melbourne,  
Melbourne, Australia  
*Website/Infrastructure Chair  
(deputy)*



**Max Garagnani**  
Goldsmiths, University Of  
London, London, United  
Kingdom  
*Sponsorship Chair*



**Dimitrios Pinotsis**  
University Of London-City,  
London, United Kingdom  
*Sponsorship Chair*

## Other changes to the Board:



**César Rennó-Costa**  
Federal University of Rio  
Grande do Norte, Natal, Brazil  
*Local Organizer*



**Eirini Mavritsaki**  
Birmingham City University,  
Birmingham, UK  
*Equity/Inclusion/Diversity (EDI)  
Chair*



**Thomas Knösche**  
Max Planck Institute for  
Human Cognitive and Brain  
Sciences, Leipzig, Germany  
*Past Local Organizer*

# News on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at OCNS: Inviting New Directors and Mentorship Program



**Eirini Mavritsaki**, Birmingham City University, Birmingham, UK

OCNS continues to recognize the importance of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion by establishing a new EDI chair in 2023. The aim is to improve equality, diversity, and inclusion within the organization. We encourage engagement of researchers of different ages, religions, ethnicities, people with disabilities, and both men and women in our organization's events and activities and leadership positions. This year, we are planning to appoint at least one student/postdoc

board member and recruit widely to achieve a balanced and inclusive representation of women in leadership positions. To enhance inclusivity, the leadership positions are also advertised more widely and we offer individual meetings with potential candidates.

Furthermore, to strengthen our inclusivity, we plan to provide further support in the form of mentorship. We are organizing a mentorship scheme aiming to develop a more supportive environment within OCNS. We ask therefore OCNS members who wish to be mentors or be mentored to come forward and email the EDI chair ([eirini.mavritsaki@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:eirini.mavritsaki@bcu.ac.uk)). The plan is to organize online meetings with both groups in which members share their experience. Through these meetings, we will support both mentors and mentees and at the same time to identify areas that we can develop further.

## A call for you to serve, from an old fart

**Astrid Prinz**, Associate Professor, Department of Biology, Emory University, Atlanta, GA, U.S.A



What follows may sound like paid advertising. It is not. It comes from the heart!

Our fellow computational neuroscientist Leonid Rubchinsky (currently OCNS Vice President) did some archaeology and found that I served on the OCNS Board of Directors for 14 consecutive years, as an elected member, ex officio during my tenure as Program Committee Chair, as President, and as Past President.

So I have some basis for what I am about to say.

I applaud the current OCNS leadership for their tremendous dedication and service toward building and sustaining an intellectually stimulating and inclusive global scientific community centered on computational neuroscience. Thank you!

What OCNS leadership does for all of us is not an easy job. If you participated in the most recent OCNS Members Meeting during the Annual CNS Meeting in Leipzig this past July '23, you will be aware of the enormous challenges, especially financially, that OCNS is facing. I trust our Board of Directors to do all that can be done to continue furthering computational neuroscience in an ever-changing global setting.

All those interested in contributing to this community and scientific effort are invited to serve as OCNS abstract reviewers, serve on the OCNS Program Committee, and run for elected membership on the OCNS Board of Directors. You can make a difference by serving, and help shape the future!

# OCNS needs you! Please self-nominate for Board of Directors vacancies. We especially encourage nominations from underrepresented groups.

OCNS is now accepting self-nominations for candidacy for the election of new members to the OCNS Board of Directors.

New Directors will serve a three-year term from January 2024 through December 2026 and will initially fill the following roles:

- Travel awards
- Newsletter
- Webmaster
- Social media
- Membership
- Workshops
- Tutorials

New Directors will act as Deputy Chairs in their roles by shadowing the current Chairs for a year, and then will take over when the current Chairs finish their terms (except for the sponsorship chair role). Candidates are required to be an OCNS for at least a year or to attend an on-site CNS conference in the past. More information about the new Directors' election can be found at

<https://www.cnsorg.org/election-procedures>

The deadline for application has been extended to October 21, 2023.

**Apply now!**

We strongly encourage OCNS members to consider self-nomination. OCNS is committed to have a wide diversity among its Directors - across research areas, gender, abilities, career experiences, geographic locations, and personal backgrounds, and this is possible only if a broad range of members apply. This year we are looking to appoint at least one student/postdoc Board Member.

The OCNS strives to be a diverse group and encourages a balanced and inclusive representation of women in leadership positions within the organization. Feel free to contact our EDI Chair Eirini Mavrtsaki (eirini.mavrtsaki@bcu.ac.uk) for a short informational meeting about joining the board.

To renew your membership, login at [cnsorg.org](https://www.cnsorg.org) to pay your OCNS dues. Please note that renewing with a multiple year membership will reduce your cost.

| Member Type                      | One year | Two years | Three years |
|----------------------------------|----------|-----------|-------------|
| Student                          | 10 USD   | 15 USD    | 20 USD      |
| Post-doc/not-for-profit employee | 20 USD   | 30 USD    | 40 USD      |
| Faculty/for-profit employee      | 50 USD   | 75 USD    | 100 USD     |

**Student:** Anybody studying toward an undergraduate or graduate degree.

**Postdoc/not-for-profit employee:** Anybody who is employed as a postdoctoral scholar or postdoctoral fellow, and anybody who is employed in a university lab or non-industry research institute as a technician or research assistant not seeking a degree.

**Faculty/for-profit employee:** Anybody who is employed as faculty, laboratory head, independent researcher, or in an equivalent position, and anybody who is employed in industry or for-profit institutions.

Retired persons should apply for or remain in their pre-retirement category.



# Remarks from OCNS Vice President

Leonid Rubchinsky, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis and Indiana University School of Medicine



**D**ear Colleagues,

I would like to use this short note to briefly write about two topics.

The first one is the historical perspective. CNS meetings started over 30 years ago in Northern California and were taking place in the Western and Eastern United States (with a notable detour to Brugge in 2000) for the first decade of its existence. The geography broadened over the next decade with the annual meeting moving to new locations in Europe, USA, and Canada. The third decade brought more substantial presence in Europe as well as the first meeting in Asia. Now, in the fourth decade of its existence, the annual CNS meeting took place in the southern hemisphere (CNS\*2022 in Australia) and will move south of the equator again next year. For the first time, the meeting will take place in Latin America (CNS\*2024 in Brazil). This is not just a geographical exploration. CNS meetings attract a large number of local students and young scientists. Thus, broadening geographic locations helps to achieve one of our

missions – to promote computational neuroscience globally and to engage young scientists across the world. As OCNS opens calls for local organizers for the years to come, we as a global organization, should consider further possibilities to move our annual meeting across our planet.

The second topic I want to write about is my role of a Vice President. It is a big honor to be elected by the Board as the VP of our organization. OCNS has not a single employee and all the activities are run by Board members who are volunteering their time and efforts. OCNS meetings are run by the volunteers from local organizing committees. They all form a great group of enthusiastic computational neuroscientists, full of new ideas, and willing to experiment with meeting format and other activities to respond to the challenges of our times. As the new OCNS Vice President, I am lucky to be in a position to support them all.

I am looking forward to seeing you at CNS\*2024 in Natal next July.

Best,  
Leonid



# CNS\*2024 will be in Natal, Brazil!

Cesar Renno Costa, Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte, Natal, Brazil



The 33rd Annual Meeting of the OCNS will, for the first time, come to Latin America. We warmly invite you to visit Natal, the Brazilian capital of the sunshine, on July 20-24, 2024.

Natal is a tourist jewel. It is ranked second as the most aspiring traveling destination among Brazilians, just behind Rio de Janeiro. Natal is among the preferred places for national conferences because of its well-established touristic infrastructure, with various lodging options available for all budgets and many possibilities for eating, relaxing, and exploring.

Our event will take place at the Praiamar Hotel, at the heart of the Ponta Negra district, just a few meters from the beach, with a view of the iconic Morro do Careca.

For those worried about the heat of the tropics, July is winter down here. The temperature barely crosses 30 degrees Celsius (86F) while the constant breeze, attracting kite and windsurfers from around the globe to explore our beautiful coastline, and the occasional light rain, which will not spoil your experience, provide a pleasant sensation.

For those eager for adventure, Ponta Negra Beach is a great place for learning surfing, and July is the right time. Our beach is the home of Jadson Andre, a



For those who would instead explore the coastline, there is a range of one-day dune trips on the traditional "bugres" or with very comfortable all-terrain vehicles. For those that prefer to revere nature, secluded beaches are reachable just on the city's outskirts.

"Brazilian storm" pioneer. It often has the presence of Italo Ferreira, the first Olympic gold medalist in surfing. The beach's unique geography also provides a perfect spot for safe swimming, snorkeling, and stand-up paddling.

As a historical heritage, you can also visit one of the first Portuguese fortresses of our colonial period or check out where the US established a hydroplane terminal that played an important role during WWII.

Brazilian music and dance concerts always exist for those looking for culture and arts. Important names such as Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil occasionally play at the Teatro Riachuelo, one of Brazil's most modern concert halls. If you want to experience different food, expect diversity. You will find many seafood dishes, meat and cheese, and tropical fruits you will only find here, such as Cajá and Mangaba. Vegetarians and vegans will not have a hard time finding savory food.



For those who would instead explore the coastline, there is a range of one-day dune trips on the traditional "bugres" or with very comfortable all-terrain vehicles. For those that prefer to revere nature, secluded beaches are reachable just on the city's outskirts.

As a historical heritage, you can also visit one of the first Portuguese fortresses of our colonial period or check out where the US established a hydroplane terminal that played an important role during WWII.

We hope you feel tempted and join us in this memorable meeting.

Cesar Renno Costa

On behalf of the OCNS, the newsletter contributors wish you much success with your research and training, and we look forward to seeing you in July for CNS\*2024 at Natal!