

# India Report

by Björn Engler

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My trip to India started in the morning on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January. The reason why we started at the end of January was the early beginning of the new semester in India. We arrived there with one extra day to adjust to the high temperature of around 33 to 36° C and great humidity. It was really necessary!

But before all this happened we had a final exam late in the afternoon on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January. This meant packing all my belongings afterwards into the backpack and not much time to say good bye. I have chosen the backpack because I planned to travel around in India and a backpack would suit this situation best. It was



Sightseeing at "Bekal Fort"

hard to decide what would be necessary to take to India and what not. I think this depends strongly on the person and the individual character. The questions were: What do I need and is there anything I cannot imagine living without it? In my case I packed a mighty bag of 13.7 kg plus two hand-luggage's. This means I was carrying the lightest of all bags. Finally I finished packing at 2am. Well, after that, I asked myself, if I missed anything. Of course I did, but I did not realise this until opening my luggage in India. I forgot my running shoes but they would not have cracked the barrier of 25 kg which was allowed on national India flight. (After our flights in India we found out that also 30 kg would have been fine, because no one seemed to care about the weight at Indian airport.) For me it was just fine. I was happy with three shirts and two trousers which I mainly used at the university. I wanted to stick to the rules and to all the regulations about what to wear and what not (for instance: NO short trousers during the lessons!!). For our free time I packed T-Shirts as well as a few short trousers. I also took some long sleeves or pullovers in case of cold evenings. Later it turned out to be the wrong

decision. They were just useless and stayed inside the cupboard. Nevertheless I would recommend taking some with you, when travelling through the country. Another important thing to think about are the passport- photographs for official purposes (15 pictures should be enough; for safety reasons pack 20, just in case).

I stayed in a hostel room and this was maybe one of the best rooms in India (as they told me and as I can imagine) and also from my "German" point of view. We had a single room with A/C, with a fan and a bathroom. A kitchen or cooking facilities I have never missed, because we always went to a restaurant in the evening. The messes around provide good food as well. The small shops right in front of the hostels are perfect for snacks (for instance: The Lipton's!). But I have to say that the hostel must not be the best decision for everybody. That is because of restricted homecoming times (at maximum 11:30 - boys have a more blurred time limitation), restriction with visitors (differentiation between male and female hostels) and main problems in getting back the money.

For the lessons at the university it is necessary to have a non-programmable calculator. Of course pen and paper are also needed. At the beginning the lessons themselves were challenging due to the language of the teachers, but it was no problem to ask them for a repetition. As I observed, we learned the Indian style of speaking English, because of our Indian friends. This means that at the end the teachers who are very friendly had more difficulties to understand us. Regarding the topics of our lessons, it was more or less challenging, because they are different to what we know from Germany. The main difference is that lessons start at 8 o'clock and end Saturdays on five o'clock. When it comes to research work or just to kill time in the room, a notebook is always extremely useful. The Library facilities are not that good to work with. But therefore the VPN-Gate to Chemnitz is very helpful, because the Indian provider is blocking a lot of connections. Furthermore, a notebook has also a second advantage, because of the battery. It will help to stay the 30 seconds during power cuts on (a battery breakdown is really annoying), which happen around 15 times a day in the hostel.

Manipal can be seen as an island in India, because it has an European style. It is quite easy to get all the things you need. If you want to go shopping for daily needs you can also go to Mangalore, which is within range of a two hour bus trip.

Last but not least, I have to say that all the fears and doubts I had at the beginning finally vanished after a few days in Manipal.