

## Three-month internship at pmlIndia Innovation Lab Manipal

### *Experiences with the public transport in India*

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When it comes to moving around and travelling in India my first raw notions were overcrowded buses and trains, streets full of small yellow-black motor-driven rickshaws and taxis, according to my guide book typically the Ambassador brand. After wonderful and exciting three months living and working as a research intern in the print and media Innovation lab in India I can say I tested probably the majority of the well-known means of transportation. Not only for travelling around over the weekend and longer distances, but also going by bus for smaller tours and day trips and through Manipal itself. I can say now that a lot of my imaginations were confirmed!

After my flight to the international airport in Mumbai the first hurdle was to reach the domestic airport and the plane to Mangalore (which is not far away from Manipal). For this reason it was necessary to find the internal bus transfer service. After stressful hours in the plane it was not that easy, but with the support of the kind Indian fellow passengers it was no problem to find the right exit where the bus was starting. It is good to be equipped with some Indian rupees to be able to give a small tip to the employee putting the luggage into the bus!

It was really great that a pickup service with taxi was arranged from the airport to the hostel, thanks to the organization by Mrs. Strauss and Mrs. Schuhmann and the cooperation with Manipal Institute of Technology. So during this 2-hour trip I made my first experiences with the loud, hectic and apparently chaotic Indian traffic and I was wondering that nobody was losing his head during hornning all the time.

The Indian bus system was confusing, too. It is not that oblivious when and how often a bus comes and in the rarest cases there was a bus number or the English name of the target town written somewhere. The Indians use another system: the ticket collector, who is in the most cases hanging out at the doors, shouts out where the bus is going. The other way around is also working, which means that you shout where you want to go and you will definitely find a bus in this direction. In Manipal almost all buses started at the Tiger Circle (TC). The most important ones are the buses to Udupi (approx. every 10 min), bus in the direction to Karkala and the red AC bus to Mangalore (costs: 80 rupees, every 30 min) or the non-AC version which is cheaper but also slower. The bus ticket is paid in the bus, the ticket price depends on the distance and travel time and is really cheap compared to European prices. For longer distances it is recommended also from the Indian students to use the sleeper buses, which drive mostly overnight. The tickets for this AC or non-AC buses have to be booked in advance. Near the TC, there are small shops from different bus travel agencies, where you can book and register for longer bus tours. Especially for foreign people exists a special tourist quota with a specific number of reserved seats. To book one of these you have to show your original passport. But be aware that because of the bad street conditions especially after/during monsoon season the bus is not that fast and because of holes in the street shaking and bouncing heavily!

For smaller distances within Manipal it is appropriate to use the small yellow-black auto rikshaws (for up to 3 persons). In Manipal, there are different rikshaw stands near the main gate of the university and the Karmat Circle (KC) in front of the food court and some other central places in the city itself, like the Tiger circle (TC), where almost all busses start. The prices are not that high for European standards, but fixed with 20 rupees for smaller and up to

30 rupees for longer distances within central places, plus the additional charge for hiring after 10pm. Because of the fixed prices and the fact that Manipal is more a university-town for rich students, no rickshaw driver uses the taximeter!

Personally I prefer to go and travel by train. An almost new train route from the south to the north along the west coast exists, which is a comfortable possibility to go from Udupi over Goa (around 5 hours) to Mumbai (depends, during monsoon season more than 12 hours) over night with the night train. Compared to the sleeper bus it was a quieter and more relaxing unshaken way of travelling. Due to the fact that I usually have problems with the too cold air condition, I booked the non-AC version. This is not only cheaper, you also get more experiences about how it is to travel through India. And it is definitely not boring! You have to watch all the time (starting from the number of people who can sleep in one bed up to the things that can be transported on a train)! The landscape in this area is also really beautiful and I can recommend this way of travelling.

The last public transport I would like to mention was the city railway in Mumbai. After crazy experiences in the second class during rush hour and a lot of quick prayers, while pressed inside, I decided to spend more money for the first class train ticket. All in all, it was the closest Indian experience I made!

After these wonderful three months, which were full of unexpected and sometimes crazy and spectacular happenings within the public transport I have to say that I appreciate the well-organized German transport system. But at the same time I miss the chaotic street flair of India. With all the other experiences I have made during the stay there, I am really thankful that with the support of DAAD and the Print Media Departments in Chemnitz and Manipal it was possible for me to go to India not only for the collaboration and research in the field of solar cells, but also to get the opportunity to life and feel this rich and totally different culture with an enormous tradition behind.



*Public transport impressions [rickshaws - train view - public transport Mumbai - inside the bus – Udupi railway station]*