

The time in India was also very special hence there were beautiful places both in and outside of Manipal that were worth seeing. Some excursions led us to places I've seen in this form never before. Two of the places are particularly memorable, as they were absolutely spectacular on the one hand and very peaceful and tranquil on the other hand.

The first trip took us to the Hanumana Gundi Waterfalls. These waterfalls are placed a little in the hinterlands of Manipal, in the Western Ghats. The Western Ghats extend from Mumbai almost to the tip of South India. To reach the falls we and some Indian friends rented a minibus on an early Sunday morning. At this early stage, there was also a typical Indian property, the unpunctuality. The guys in our group were of course very punctual at the concerted point, only the Indians weren't coming. It took 45 minutes till the group was complete. Even the trip to the falls prepared some typical Indian situations. The first stop on our trip was a restaurant where we ate breakfast. Situated in the middle of nowhere, this place offered a food an outspoken enjoyment, just like almost everywhere. After breakfast it should go directly to the falls, but this prevented the flat tire on the rented bus. Luckily there was a spare tire, just without any air. As said, we were in the middle of nowhere, so it seemed almost like a miracle, that the bus driver found any way to inflate the tire with air. That is probably one of the things that central Europeans found whimsical, but also very fascinating. After briefly changing the tire, we quickly could go to our aim.

The time at the falls we first spent with playing in the water, which had as a result an extensive drying time in the sun, as we all plunged into the water with all our clothes. The beauty of the falls is difficult to summarize here in words. In this season, they flow almost peaceful down the mountain, but as we have heard this watercourse changes in the monsoon season into a raging force of nature. Since this was one of our first trips, we experienced how much the hinterland of Manipal has to offer. The landscape is dominated by the extensive rainfall in the second half of the year and so a big jungle dominates this territory.

The Easter weekend we used for a trip of a different cast. Karfreitag or rather "Good Friday" is in India also a holiday. That we used to make the Saturday as a bridging day and so we had a complete holiday weekend available. The path should lead us to Kerala, which is a state in the south of Karnataka. The Kerala's Coast is characterized by the fact that they are drained by waterways, the so called backwaters. In the middle of such a backwater the Oyster Opera is situated. This is a small cottage settlement surrounded by numerous mussel farms. To get there our group had to do the first Indian train journey. About the Indian train system of course some prejudices are in everybody's mind, but the more surprising the ride with such a train was. The outward journey was completely smooth and we had no reasons to complain in any way. That we would make quite a different experience on the way back, we could have not guess at this point. But first, back to the mussel farm. The Oyster Opera is located near the village of Padanna and has a linear distance of Manipal of about 150 km. The ride with the rickshaw from the station to the bungalow village indicated that we landed in a idyllic corner of India. Coconut palms lined the

entire route and the backwaters made their way through the islands shaped landscape. The holiday village itself then was a cut above. The small cottages offered a fancy picture and the best part was that we stayed the weekend there mostly alone. Thus, we also were offered a special attention by some of the staff, who took care about us especially at the meals. The food itself again was a culinary delight. Since Kerala is more influenced by Muslim, it is also rather cooked in this direction. The best part is that Muslims eat beef and after a long time we got to eat beef again. Particularly the guys were very pleased. At the meals back the incredible Indian hospitality wear came out again. No matter where you are, the feel-good factor in this country is very high and everybody almost exclusively is taken up with open arms and no request seems too big to satisfy it.

The paradise atmosphere there was indeed mentionable and I would even go so far that the Oyster Opera is probably the most beautiful place I've seen up to this point. From the picturesque sunsets up to the hammock under coconut palms this spot had to offer everything just to let your mind wander. The beach on the Arabian Sea was not too far away, even though he could be reached only by boat. There a helpful Indian brought us every day by his boat.

It really lacked for nothing there and the Oyster Opera was simply a place where you can just unwind and relax. Everybody of the group felt difficulties after three wonderful days with letting go off this beautiful place. All in all, this trip to Kerala probably had been the most loveliest thing we had done in India. Of course I am not saying that there were no other beautiful places, but of the wonderful areas in India Kerala is the most beautiful.

Even the trip home offered again an outstanding experience that could not be more indian, because there was still another train ride home. As already mentioned the Indian trains are quite comfortable (at least until you have booked the right class), so there were no great thoughts about the driving home. The targeted goal was Mangalore again, but we weren't quite clear which train to take. It should be said that on the ticket is a number that belongs to the respective train. At this time that fact wasn't really distinct to us since the trains had a lot of numbers. After a few inquire with people who were at the station, they assured us that the next train sure will drive to Mangalore. The problem was that every train went to Mangalore, but we had to find the right one and so the confusion was complete. At about the punctual time a train came indeed we were assured again that this is the right one an so we got on it. To get into our compartment, we had to walk a little through the train, until some kind of conductor stopped and told me that we were still on the wrong train. A quick call to the others sufficed that all left the train. When I came to the door, I noticed in consternation that the train already moved. It is not a good jumping off moving things With a big Backpack and flipflops at the feet, I truely can say. Now of course we were the centerpoint of the station, but that is one of the stories that never will be forgotten. After a while the right train came and we arrived Manipal safe and sound.

With Kerala and Hanumana Gundi just two of the many impressive places were described here. Books could be filled with all the stories, which certainly could not describe nearly everything to see in and around Manipal. That makes this colorful country so unique and I will never forget those wonderful moments.