

OIN STUDENT REPORT

Note1: you may either fill this form or use this form to structure your own report (which you may send us in Word or as a PDF)

Note2: the report will be posted anonymously on the OIN website by the OIN Academic Director. If you are sending in a PDF please make sure that you refrain from putting your name in the document.

Note3. You may send some photos. Do remember that if you, or other students, are in the photos we need your permission (and that of the other students in the photos) before posting them on the website.

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- Host Institution: Symbiosis Institute of International Business (SIIB), Pune, Maharashtra
 - Home Institution: Ryerson University

 - Type of Exchange:
 - Regular exchange. _____
 - SSP X _____
 - SIP _____

 - Term and year in which you were on exchange in India: September – October 2017

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- A. Please write between one and three paragraphs on your experience at your host institution (you may write about your courses/independent study there, hostel accommodation if you stayed on campus, campus experience, interactions with other students on campus and/or faculty, and so on).

I participated in a short-term research project at SIIB under the supervision of the head of the Energy and Environment program. As I was not enrolled in classes, I spent most of my time conducting independent research in the library and meeting with faculty experts. My supervisor, Dr. Prakash Rao, was a very friendly and knowledgeable advisor and I met with him weekly. As I had already finished my master's by the time I began this program it took us a couple of weeks to determine my study topic. The faculty here are extremely busy, so it is sometimes difficult to get time with them to thoroughly discuss ideas, therefore the student must take most of the initiative when developing their topic and completing their research.

I lived on campus, as is the requirement for all students at SIIB, at the Symbiosis Infotech Campus, located a short walk from the SIIB campus. The campus had a cafeteria, general store, laundry, juice bar and photocopy centre. As all the Indian students continually reminded me, the menu was a little repetitive; however, there are street food stalls close to the campus that offer more exciting options. Students were friendly, but very few took the initiative to introduce themselves so you have to be a little

more outgoing. This was probably compounded by the fact that I did not have classes and was doing most of my work independently. Campus life is much more restrictive than Canada; there is a curfew, men and women live in separate dormitories, there is no drinking, and there are restrictions on internet (sports, entertainment, streaming). For this reason I would encourage any student to get an Indian SIM card upon arrival. The data plans are unbelievably cheap, but you'll need an Indian to buy it for you and an unlocked phone. I would also suggest asking the campus administrator whether the internet in your dorm is wireless or ethernet.

Fortunately, I was able to explore the country a bit during my time here. As I did not have classes I had a relatively flexible schedule and was able to go to Mumbai, Mysore, Kanpur, and the northeast states before going back to Canada. My supervisor was very supportive of my travel; however, it is my understanding that with classes a minimum attendance is required so if you are here for exchange you may not get as much free time to travel. It really is a beautiful and compelling country, and a visit here is certainly worthwhile. For me, the two month program was perfect as it was enough time feel like you were actually living here and not just visiting, and also complete some academic work. However, if one was to come and do research as part of their thesis, or wanted to do primary research, more time would be required, as things tend to move slower here.

- B. Please write about your experience of the city in which your host institution is located (including transportation for getting around the city, places you would recommend for eating and sightseeing)

One of the main benefits of getting an Indian sim card is the ability to use Uber. It is much cheaper here compared to Canada and is readily available throughout the city (though uber drivers can sometimes take a while to arrive after they are requested... be patient). The street food was delicious, especially the rolls, but only go to places that you see other students eating from or that other students have recommended. For other restaurant options I either asked students or just used google ratings. Restaurants are all very affordable, but many are only veg and don't serve alcohol. The veg food is incredible though, and while I do eat meat back in Canada, I ate hardly any over here as the veg food was so flavourful (no tofu dogs or soy patties).

- C. Please write about your experiences in the host country, if you did some travelling (including mode of transportation, finding accommodation, places you visited, people you met, cost of transportation and accommodation, and so on).

My girlfriend and I came three weeks early to travel around India and Sri Lanka. We arrived in Delhi which was incredibly overwhelming. One of the things one needs to get used to is the noise and traffic congestion, especially because there are not many sidewalks, so you're often forced to walk along the road. This was frightening at first but I recommend walking against traffic so you can see it coming, and keeping a steady pace, no jumpy movements. The vehicles will end up just driving around you, but keep your wits. While with my girlfriend we took mostly hired cabs which your hotel can arrange, or you can find online quite easily. While travelling alone I took mostly buses, and booked those through redbus; however, redbus does not accept international cards so you'll need an Indian friend to book them for

you. Prices are cheap, approximately 200-300 Rupees for a 4-6 hour trip, and are typically much cheaper than the train. The train also books up much faster so buses are more convenient and available. I also took flights which compared to Canada are quite inexpensive (\$150 -\$250 round trip). Had no trouble using my Canadian card booking these. For accommodations, I used a mix of Airbnb and booking.com, however, most places require that you pay in rupees, so make sure your bank card works here (my BMO and PC bank card both worked, though PC only worked with a couple bank machines).

The students will also be able to give you some good tips on travel. I was here during Diwali and one of the students invited me to his family's home in the north of the country. If you get an opportunity like this I say do it, it was the highlight of my trip. They were so welcoming and hospitable and it was incredible to spend such an important and celebrated holiday with my friend and his family. It's opportunities like these that you'll get by living on the campus that you otherwise likely wouldn't get just by travelling around the country.

D. Other (feel free to write about anything else that you think may help OIN students in subsequent years).

The traffic, noise and pollution can be overwhelming at times, luckily SIIB campus is outside of Pune city, so there is much less traffic, noise and air pollution. However, this also means that you're also a bit isolated and are not as close to good restaurants, bars, entertainment. Travelling within any city will take a long-time due to congestion problems, especially during rush hour so plan ahead (check google maps). Ultimately though, this is a tremendous opportunity to immerse yourself in another culture. The research project specifically was great because it was a shorter term and had less structure than an exchange program may with classes and assignments. I would recommend that before coming you communicate with your supervisor to determine what your topic will be so you don't spend time finalizing that while here. As I said, campus life is different here, so if you want to come here and hope to spend time partying, drinking, watching Netflix and hanging out, I wouldn't recommend this program. I'm not saying this to be judgmental, I like doing all those things, but when you are here you become quickly aware of the basic things from home that you miss, so if you think you'll have trouble with living in a dorm where you have to check-in and don't have the same freedoms you would have at home, you should consider whether this is the right fit. However, staying on campus you feel well taken care of; it's comfortable and it gives you the opportunity to form strong friendships and interact with Indian students. Also, as a foreign student I was given my own dorm room, whereas the Indian students had to share three to a room. I realize this is preferential treatment, but I greatly appreciated it as this would have been far more challenging if I had two roommates I didn't know. Overall this program was a very positive experience which I would definitely recommend. It is a great reason to come to India and do some leisure travelling around what is a beautiful and diverse country. It can be challenging at times due to language barriers, delays, and bureaucracy, but in the end those are minor inconveniences in what will otherwise be a life-changing trip.