

Host Institution: Miranda house College, University of Delhi

Home Institution: University of Ottawa

Type of exchange: Regular Exchange

Term and Year: Second Semester of third year, Term 6, 2018

- A) The University of Delhi is made up of multiple colleges situated in different sectors of Delhi. I had the opportunity to attend Miranda House College, which is in north Delhi. According to The Ministry of Human Resource Development's National Institutional Ranking Framework, Miranda House was Ranked the number one college in India for 2018. It is a very impressive status however, I am not surprised due to the students, faculty members, and others who make the college function.

Miranda house is a beautiful and safe college. Having the opportunity to live on campus had a positive effect on how quickly I was able to adjust to my new environment. Compared to the University campuses in Canada this one is small and intimate. All the guards, cooks, cleaners and wardens were so welcoming and ready to help. It definitely felt like a little heaven with the beautiful flowers filling the front lawns. At times, as a foreigner in Delhi it can feel overwhelming and of course I experience some culture shock, so having a safe place was essential. Additionally, living on Campus made student life so easy! I was just a few steps away from my classes, there were meals prepared for us, laundry services available, and my room had its own bathroom and AC. I was very fortunate to get the opportunity to stay in the college hostel and get to know the students a little better. I found it interesting because those living on campus often came from other states, so they themselves were experiencing what it was like to move to a new place. The hostel life also included activities during certain holidays. For example, during Lohri the girls taught me how to dance and the traditions around the festival, on Holi we played with powdered colors, and during Easter we painted eggs and played games.

Miranda house is an all-girls college made up of talented, artistic, athletic, passionate, kind, intelligent individuals. The moment college started the students were very curious as to what I was doing in their college. They were all so welcoming offering to take me out for chai and discuss my experiences. Some students were able to join me on my touristic outings and others showed me the good places to shop and eat. I was fortunate that students felt very comfortable opening up to me about their problems or differences since I came from a western society, which is typically less conservative. Additionally, the girls at the college demonstrated a lot of dedication, advocacy for feminism, and equal rights for the differently abled.

As I began to get to know the students I learnt that a large majority of the students were "toppers" meaning that they scored the top highest grade within their home state. Other students were the best athletes of their states. This was quite overwhelming and worried me at first, however the classes were always pretty clear. At times, there were language barriers but there was always a student ready to help and the teachers did not mind taking more time to address any concerns. In the end, the teacher really just wanted the students to succeed and learn. While I attended Miranda house college I had the opportunity to take part in a conference with international speakers and also experience a variety of

college festivals. During the college festivals, I had the chance to see dances that originated from various regions of India. I tried all sorts of different dishes and got to experience live music and DJs.

Thanks to my physical education teacher I was invited to play on the netball/basketball team. During these practices, I learnt a new sport, I got to learn a little about female athletes in India, and I realized how little I knew of Hindi. Overall it was a really a great experience and I was able to make some new friends in the process. In fact, due to one of the friends I made during netball, I was invited to go to wedding which was an unforgettable experience. Overall the teaching staff was very accommodating and wanted me to be able to experience everything they had to offer.

- B) Delhi was a great city for a student exchange because there is so many places to visit, plenty of great restaurants, and almost all of it is accessible by metro. Delhi is typically known to be dangerous for women especially at night so it is important to take precautions and as much as possible visit and travel with friends. I personally did travel alone but only after I had two months of practice traveling with another Canadian woman. I personally found the metro was the most efficient way to get around the city. It is cost effective and has a carriage specifically dedicated to women. It even connects to the airport. There are Ubers available as well as Ola (Ubers Indian equivalent). For short distances, there are rickshaws. Finally scooters and motorcycles can be rented or purchased. Overall Delhi offers every method of transportation you can think of.

For restaurants, it is hard to name all of the good ones since there are so many with such a vast range of prices and types of cuisine. If I had to pick my favourite it would be the mutton korma at Karim's near Jama Masjid. The second would have to be on the fancier side called "On The waterfront" outside The Lodi hotel it is super chic and was truly a culinary experience. A reservation is recommended. There are other fancy places I never had a chance to try such as, the restaurant at the Taj Mahal Hotel. Finally, in Khan market there are plenty of great restaurants and good cafes that serve real coffee! (if you're a coffee addict like me it is important). Saket is an area in South Delhi that has some really interesting hidden restaurants and shops. The list could go on forever!

There are so many touristic spots and things to visit In Delhi. My favourite monument was Humayun's Tomb. For a walk in the park and discovering ruins go to the Lodi garden. Afterwards you can visit Khan Market which is nearby for a fancier shopping scene and lovely places to eat and drink. Other tourist attractions to see include: Jama Masjid, The Red Fort, Qutb Minar, Lotus temple, Gurudwara Bangla Sahib, and Akshardham. Hauz khas is a popular place for night life but it also has a park with a body of water to visit. Gurgaon which is actually located just outside of Delhi has a place called cyber city which is a very new and clean area to shop and go out. There are many places to shop and many malls in Delhi to visit. Delhi Haat is good for shopping for more traditional things and souvenirs, sarojini market is where the students go to find better deals. Connaught place (CP) is also a shopping area with more tradition shops but on the outskirts, has bazars and markets. CP is also a popular place for food and drinks.

C) During my exchange, I took every chance I could to see as much of India as possible. My first trip was to Agra to see the Taj Mahal. Since I was travelling with another person we decided to split the cost of a driver to Agra instead of taking the train. We were told that the train was often delayed and that with the train you still needed transportation to the location and from our hostel. Hiring a driver was more for our convenience and to save on time. It ended up costing more than we expected with extra toll chargers and other taxes however overall was a good price for having a driver for a day.

Our second trip was to Jaipur, we hired a driver to get there. At that point, we were still having trouble booking our own trains and our trips were usually planned last minute. We stayed at a hostel that I found online with good reviews where another Indian traveler told us about redBus. This app allows you to book busses from government buses which are generally cheaper to Volvo buses which are comfier but a bit costlier. After exploring the beautiful places in Jaipur, we tried redBus for the first time and it was definitely an experience. We got onto the wrong bus and so for half the ride it was pretty uncomfortable but halfway they switched us and it was a lot better.

Finally, my last trip with my traveling partner was to Dehradun where we went trekking with an organized group we had signed up with online. The trek was called Nag Tibba it was a short but eventful trek. We experienced rain and a hailstorm on the way up and pretty cold temperatures at night. On the way to Dehradun we took a bus but on the way back we had to take a train, since I got sick and needed access to a toilet during the journey.

My first trip on my own was during reading break I flew to the south of India to discover Kerala. I landed in Kochi stayed mostly in hostels during my whole trip apart from when I was in Munnar where I stayed in hotels or guest house with friends I made along the way. After Kochi, I traveled to Alleppey by train. In Alleppey I met some great people while I stayed at a hostel called Zostel. During this trip, I spent a lot of time by the beach, kayaking, backwater tours, trying out local foods, and riding scooters it was really great. I continued by train to Varkala where there was cliff side beaches, great restaurants, yoga, and shopping. Finally, a friend took me with his motorcycle to Munnar since it is a little harder to travel to. Motorcycle was the quickest and cheapest way to get there and was very useful once we were in Munnar. Munnar is a hill station with tea plantations, some beautiful views and possibility of seeing wild animals.

Once back at school I made another weekend trip to Amritsar I took a night bus there and a night bus back. I only stayed the day but I had a great visit of the golden temple, met some really nice people who wanted to show me around and share their religion with me. I also went to the boarder show which was really cool. My trip finished by seeing the golden temple at night all lit up!

When my classes were completed and my transcript was sent to Canada, I was off to Rishikesh to escape from the heat. I spent a couple days relaxing by the ganga, finding waterfalls, going on scooter rides, river rafting, all with friends I made in the hostel I was

staying at. I took a night bus directly from Delhi to Rishikesh and after staying a few days I was brought from Rishikesh to a town farther north called Lohajung to start the eight-day trek. I signed up with a company called Himalayan Trekkers and they were great! If I had to choose one single favourite experience I had during my stay in India, it would have to be this Roopkund trek I did. It was intense, physically and mentally demanding, but it was so rewarding. The people in my group also had a huge influence on how great the adventure turned out to be. We had pretty bad conditions but Himalayan Trekkers took such good care of us and we managed to lift each other's spirits even when we wanted to give up.

Finally, my last trip was back down south by flight to Goa where I also got to visit Hampi. Unfortunately, I got a sun stroke after my first day in the sun. I traveled within Goa using public busses or scooter taxis. I met a friend and we treated ourselves to a resort with a pool! After several relaxing days, I took a train to Hampi a beautiful city with so much to see. I hired a guide to take me around to the best sites and found some amazing ruins and lakes. During my stay, I watched almost every single sunset and ate lots of south Indian cuisine.

Today unfortunately is a day filled with goodbyes, it's my last day in Delhi. It is so bittersweet. I have had so many great moments and also hard times here. I am excited to go back home but also sad for this chapter to end. I will definitely be back in India one day!

Thank you OIN for this experience.