

OIN: STUDENT REPORTS: SUMMER PROGRAMS 2016 (SIP; SRP; IIP)

Report 1: by 2016 Study India Program by student from Western University

This year I was fortunate to attend the Study in India Program hosted by Symbiosis International University at Senapat Bapat Road in Pune, Maharashtra. I was also fortunate to spend two days at IIT Bombay located in the Powai suburb of Mumbai. From the beginning as I arrived at Symbiosis, I felt welcomed as I reached to the hostel. My stay there was pleasant as the staff were extremely friendly and the rooms were clean and neat.

The activities for SIP were both very diverse and numerous. It was a great introduction to India as we not only went on site tours in Pune and Aurangabad but we also experienced Indian culture first hand. Firstly, we learned at to cook Pav Bhaji at Mrunal's (one of our coordinators') house and we learned Bollywood dancing from a student of Symbiosis. Additionally, I also enjoyed doing Warli indigenous art as well as learning about Vedic math. These four activities gave the program a more diverse flavor compared to solely attending lectures on the humanities and tours.

The lectures we attended were interesting and the teachers were very knowledgeable and engaging. I especially enjoyed the lectures on Mahatma Gandhi and the lecture on sustainable/environmental development in India. Along with that, the week at the Doorstep School NGO was also another great learning opportunity as we had a chance to interact with children who come from more different circumstances. That experience along with the Aurangabad trip were the two highlights of my exchange. The hotel in Aurangabad was amazing and the Ajanta and Ellora caves were both stunning. Especially the Ajanta caves as they were down in a valley.

If I were to do the program again, I would like to have more interaction with the local Indian students. Instead, this year all the Canadians mostly spent time with themselves for all the activities and in the evening we mostly spent time amongst ourselves. Instead, attending classes with and having the opportunity to eat and do activities with the local Indian kids at Symbiosis would greatly add to the program. Also, the schedule was very packed and we were busy every day, even on weekends. Next time it would be nice to have more free days in order to explore more of the city. Thirdly, the village trip we went on was a great learning experience but for next time it would be more enriching to visit a real Indian village instead of an eco-tourist-mock village. A large part of India is in its villages and rural areas. Even though those villages may not have the facilities that international students are used to, visiting a village in India would be a great experience that one will not get elsewhere. Other than that, attending the SIP at Symbiosis in Pune was an amazing learning opportunity that I would recommend to others most definitely.

Lastly, I would like to give a special thanks to our coordinators in the international office: Manasi, Mrunal, Bhakti, and SD. To Amol Bhaiya and Krishna Bhaiya who served us chai and food. And to Sandeep and Ahmed who took care of us in the hostel. And last but not least, to Prof. Kamra who kept in touch with us and guided us from beginning to end.

IIT Bombay

Along with visiting Symbiosis, I also had the opportunity to stay in the hostel at IIT Bombay. In the beginning, I was welcomed by Mr. Arnab Das from the IIT international office who introduced me to Mr. Shubham Goel from the international students' council. Shubham then introduced me to Ms. Deewanshi Rawat from the HSS (Humanities and Social Science) Students' Council

I was very lucky because Deewanshi helped me from the beginning to the end of my stay at IIT. On the first day, she helped move me into the hostel where accommodations were arranged for me prior to my arrival. After, even though she wasn't able to show me around the campus personally, she made sure that there was someone to show me the facilities. She also spent her time personally making sure that I could sign in to get food from the mess and if she wasn't able to, she made sure that one of her friends was able to do it for me. Without Deewanshi, my stay at IIT wouldn't have been what it was.

After moving in, I got a tour of the campus from Deewanshi's friend Naina who showed me Powai Lake and from her friend Bhuvi who showed me the campus. I was very impressed with the gymnasium facilities and outdoor concert area where events are held for IIT's technology and arts conference that is held annually. I was also impressed with the variety of extracurricular opportunities at IIT. Activities were more apparent such as clubs about plane modelling, to yoga, to indian classical music compared to extracurricular activities offered at my Symbiosis campus. On the second day, I spent my time with Deewanshi in the HSS faculty's computer lab where I was able to work on my essay.

At IIT was also impressed with the additional faculties like Management and HSS as I thought that IIT only had programs for engineering and computer science. On the last day, Deewanshi introduced me to Prof. Ashish Pandey from the School of Management where I learned about his research, along with opportunities in India.

Overall, I had a great experience at IIT with the beautiful campus, kind students and staff along with receiving an introduction to the opportunities offered at the school. It is definitely a place I would recommend to other students, Indian or Canadian.

I would also like to extend a big thanks to Deewanshi Rawat, Arnab in the international office, Shubham Goel, Deewanshi's friends Bhuvi, Naina, Anupam and others along with the other international office and hostel staff who arranged for my comfortable stay.

REPORT 2: by 2016 Study India Program student from Ryerson University

Before I left for Pune, I was not sure what to expect. Our group consisted of 6 students from Ontario who were participating in the 1 month Study India Program at Symbiosis University (Senapati Bapat Campus).

I took a direct flight to Pune Airport (Half-hour drive to campus) while most of the group flew to Mumbai Airport (This means 4 hour drive to the school campus). The schools sent a driver to pick me up from the airport. He did not speak English so it was a quiet ride to the school.

Upon arrival, I was taken upstairs by a guard to the hostel room (on twin sharing basis) which was very comfortable. The rooms are fully furnished, with air conditioners, TVs, fridges and a bathroom. The hallway has a microwave and washing machine. The rooms are cleaned daily.

The program fee includes breakfast and lunch daily which were delicious and always something to look forward to. The Study India Program at Symbiosis was very structured in the sense that the entire month was planned out for us including activities, shopping, visiting tourist attractions and even a spa. There was not much time to plan our own activities.

The program itself was so much fun – I have visited India before but visiting Pune with a group was very different. We got to participate in a variety of activities such as volunteering at a non-governmental organization (a school for children from lower income families) and participating in Indian festivals such as Raksha Bandhan. Being at Symbiosis also allowed us to interact with international students from everywhere in the world and explore the night life in Pune.

Some of the challenges we faced included:

1. The language barrier – Marathi and Hindi are the spoken languages in Pune. It was a little hard to communicate things (such as getting things “to go” in restaurants) to the local people.
2. There are a lot of delays and time can be wasted while waiting for activities to begin – this was a little difficult for us as Canadians who are always on time to get used to.
3. The program incorporated early morning Yoga/Bollywood Dance/Zumba Dance which combined with the day packed with activities was very difficult to participate in.
4. Many of our group got sick from the different food in India. My suggestion would be to never drink water that isn't bottled, to take Probiotics daily and to only eat from establishments that appear clean (no street food!)

The evaluation for the program was relaxed and we were allowed a week after departing Pune to submit our essays.

REPORT 3: by 2016 Study India Program student from Western University

My experience in Pune, India this past August was one that I will never forget. The team at Symbiosis were always striving to make the experience a pleasant one with hospitality at the forefront of their priorities. Me and the other program participants were always met with warm smiles and the desire to make sure all of our needs were taken care of.

I especially enjoyed the trip to Aurangabad and think that mini trip was one of the highlights of my time there. Prior to going into the program I did not have many expectations, however as a person who is not worried about the details of such a trip this worked very well for me. I think if I had an expectations prior they would have under estimated the amazing experience I did have. All-in-all having an open mind was key to enjoying this experience.

If I had any recommendations for future SIP programs or for exchange in particular, I would advise to have more communication between students and program organizers at Symbiosis during the actual program. It was common that day to day we would not know where we were going or what the timeline was. And while this is not an issue at all, if there was to be an area for an improvement that is what I would think of.

In regards to the curriculum of the program itself, it was very nicely balanced with academic learning and cultural experiences which was a nice surprise. I would recommend next year not having the “Health Modules”. These were scheduled at 7am a few times a week and as the schedule was constantly full of activities for 4 straight weeks (I think we only ever had 2 afternoons free to ourselves, and even then these were last minute free periods so we were not able to “plan” anything) it was a challenge to have to go exercise so early.

India was such a learning experience for myself and I think I have left the program with a new appreciation for India culture. Manasi, Mrunal, Bhakti, Swati, and SD were all the most welcoming people who made us feel safe and taken care of. They are an extremely special team and this program would not be the same without them. Sukeshi, you are also a rock star and having you visit was absolutely amazing I know all of us students loved having you there and it was a pleasure to be able to meet you in person- in India no less! Thank you so much for allowing me to be a part of the program and I look forward to encouraging friends and other students to participate next year!

REPORT 4: BY 2016 Study India Program student from Carleton University

My experience in India was pretty much how I expected it to go. The first two weeks are a big adjustment period as it is completely different way of doing things from Canada after that you'll realize that everything is fine and you just go with the Indian flow. The monsoon rains during the first two week of August were unusually heavy (30-50mm/day). Don't forget to bring water-resistant sandals that have grip; Indian floor are slick! There were peacocks in the hilly-forested areas around our campus on Senapati Bapat Rd.

The best part of the Study India Program (SIP) were the field trips we were taken on in between the coursework and workshops. Seeing the sights such as Ellora and Ajanta cave temples as well as historic sites in Pune such as the Aga Khan Palace help illustrate why Indians are so proud of their country's history including their independence struggle.

The food was excellent and everyone in the group loved Pav Bhaji, a street food. We also got an opportunity to cook it at the home of one of Symbiosis University's International Officers, Mrunal. If she is still there when you go on your Indian adventure you'll for sure become friends with her and the others in the International Office they're wonderful people and super helpful.

Fear not about the coursework, it's a good addition that gives you some context about the environment that you're seeing around you. It is not onerous by any means and the workshops are lots of fun! Workshops included drawing, cooking and dance. Expected to learn how to Bollywood dance. We had to do a performance of Bollywood dance at the end of our four weeks there!

Things to consider:

- Getting a SIM card is not an easy process but getting a data plan would allow you to use Uber and Ola (a cab app) which are far more reliable than trying to hail an auto rickshaw in the rain (they often refuse you).
- As you may read in other reports, bring your pharmacy with you, the food is delicious but there's no getting around getting the occasional Delhi belly.
- You don't need malaria pills; the university sprays deet clouds to minimize them during the monsoon.
- If you are staying in India less than 90 days total, get a tourist visa. A student visa requires you to go to the Foreigner's Registration Office at the police station at least twice to get a resident permit which is not a pleasant experience.
- Ask for coffee if you don't like chai!

Enjoy India!

REPORT 5: By Western University student who did two month internship at Women's Feature Service (NGO; Delhi; summer 2016)

I moved to Delhi on July 22, 2016 with little knowledge of the country. It ended up being the best decision I made.

I always knew I wanted to pursue a career in International Affairs. After completing the majority of my studies this year, I decided to take some time to find an internship that will enhance my hands-on skills. I discovered the OUI Program in December and decided to contact Professor Kamra, who is the Director of OMG, right away. She responded within days and we quickly began emailing back and forth. During my application process, Professor Kamra was extremely helpful in providing me all necessary information on both the internship and my move to Delhi.

Although my internship began late July, Professor Kamra made sure to maintain extensive communication with me so to better my experience. She even came to India to visit all the OMG students in August despite her busy schedule. She really provided a care and concern additional to her role as Director. For this, I am very grateful.

My stay in Delhi was hard, yet extremely rewarding. I have learned so much within the past two months and can safely say that my experience has made me stronger than ever. Luckily, Jacy, another participant in the program, and I decided to live together after meeting at the conference in May. Having her by my side has be very helpful in dealing with the culture shock.

My time as a Journalism and Mass Communications intern with Women's Feature Service (WFS) was more than worthwhile. I handled office correspondence, wrote articles and covered events and conferences all over Delhi. These tasks really gave me insight into the daily operation of a NGO, something that will definitely help me in my future endeavours. My co-workers have been very helpful, constantly caring for my wellbeing and comfort. Director of WFS, Rakhee Bakshee has also guided me immensely along the way. With her encouragement and support, I was given opportunities including going to UN Conferences, contacting High Commissions, and interviewing experts in various fields.

Finally, I have also the opportunity to travel around India during weekends. From Agra and the Taj Mahal to Dunagiri in the Himalayans, I have witnessed some of the most incredible sights. As an avid traveller, I feel India as one of the most diverse countries in the world, in terms of scenery, culture, and the different religious that walk the same path of life.

I urge everyone, if given the opportunity, to apply for the OMG Program. I think the experience of living in India is incomparable to anything else. The opportunity presented while interning here and the self-less assistance provided by every individual involved in the program will definitely benefit anyone, regardless of their future pursuits.

REPORT 6: BY Ryerson University STUDENT WHO DID A two month RESEARCH PROJECT AT IISER (Pune; summer 2016)

Summer Research Program (SRP): Indian Institute of Science and Education (IISER)

The months from June to August in Pune as a summer intern was an amazing opportunistic experience. The internship was carried out at Indian Institute Of Science and Education (IISER) Pune, Maharashtra.

I flew to Mumbai (International Airport) and then took a four hour drive to IISER campus. The campus was green and spacious. It consisted of lecture hall complex, research laboratories, main academic building (space for Professors and research students), student's hostels, guest rooms, and a two floor canteen. An outdoor and indoor places for sport activities were under construction.

The administration gave me a room on the top most floor of the hostel building. The view was scenic consisted of beautiful green mountains and a blue white sky. The room was equipped with a study, closet and a bed. The hallway had washing machine and a common washroom. The rooms were cleaned every other day. The campus was kept neat and tidy.

The program helped me to build connection with a supportive and knowledgeable professor. I was given a desk at the main building along with other researchers. Schedule meeting were carried out. I worked on data mining relating to health and science. The work had a slow progress but it was completed with a successful inference and lastly a report was submitted.

The other places which I visited in Pune: The Aga Khan Palace, Shaniwar Wada, Lal Mahal, The famous temple 'Dagadusheth halwai ganesh temple', Pataleshwar Caves, Parvati hills, Mulshi dam, Raghiv Gandhi Zoological Park and some gardens here and there.

The food was spicy and tasteful. There were bunch of restaurants close by which served Italian, Indian, Mexican, etc. of which my favorite was 'pav bhaji'. There were lot of street stall serving food, I tried to avoid them due to hygienic issues.

The days were hot and humid and nights cold. I also got a chance to get wet in Pune rains while trekking.

I also attended few seminars and yoga classes. Overall the experience at Pune was unique and a memorable one. It gave me a great opportunity to visit a n