

Marco Polo Study Report - NLSIU Bangalore

My Study Programme

I was lucky to get accepted to the National Law School of India in Bangalore for my exchange, the most competitive and best law school in the country. After a month of travelling India in October, the trimester (yes, not semester) started on the 2nd of November. The university allowed us to sit in for all seminar courses in the first week so that we could decide which courses we wanted to pick, which was very helpful. However, and due to the trimester system, me and my fellow exchange student from Groningen had to take a whopping 5 courses, compared to the 3 that the regular students at NLSIU would normally take. All courses follow a 75 percent attendance policy and include written examinations, presentations, homework assignments and a final paper. Accordingly, the workload was much more compared to that in the LL.B. at the RUG, and I would also claim that the discussed material was more difficult than in Groningen. Generally, course quality was high and I found most of my courses to be very interesting, especially one course I had that focussed on Bollywood and another on Narcotics Legislation in India - I want to remind you again that the workload was very high, especially at the end of the trimester with preparations for exams and final papers.

Language

Language generally was not a problem at NLSIU. Since the students come from all over India and speak different languages, everyone converses in English and does so at a very high level, which made integration very easy. Professors and university staff also spoke perfect English, only a few older professors were difficult to understand at times due to a strong accent, but one gets used to this quickly and it did not pose any major problems. English is also sufficient to live in Bangalore, street signs, prices and the metro are all labeled in English and most people will have basic skills, even though less educated or older people often times do not speak the language - again, this did not pose any problems as you will be able to communicate with simple words or gestures. Most students at NLSIU do not speak Kannada (the language spoken in Karnataka) either, so we were all in the same boat!

Finance and other conditions

The only major expense of my exchange was obviously the flight, which is however almost totally covered by the Marco Polo grant made available by the RUG. Once in India living expenses are substantially cheaper than they are in Groningen, meaning that one can afford to eat out and take taxis regularly, even on a limited student budget. Just a rough estimate, but I would say during my time there I spent around 250 Euros a month - but this included travel, eating out almost every meal, souvenirs

and regular visits to concerts in Bangalore, which has an amazing live music and party scene!

Preparation and contacts with the faculty before, during, and after stay

Contacting the university before my stay was almost impossible as the staff barely replied to any emails sent by me or my fellow student and did not pick up the phone either. Going to India I was therefore extremely nervous about my stay and whether everything would work out fine, but as it usually goes in India, everything took its time but ended up just fine. This is something to keep in mind and be aware of, anyone that needs certainty and order will probably not be happy at NLSIU, where classes would be rescheduled 20 minutes before the intended start regularly, and information about the exams was hardly available. Once on campus however everyone is extremely helpful and all offices open for students, meaning that one can rarely plan ahead, but whatever difficulties might arise will usually be solvable with the help of Indian students or staff.

Housing

NLSIU provides its exchange students with a shared room in one of its dorms on campus. The rooms were cheap with stable electricity and WIFI and protected by guards. Breakfast and dinner is also provided in a cafeteria right next to the dorms, most exchange students however chose to eat out as the quality of the food served at the university was not up to Western standards - but definitely edible and a convenient solution if one was feeling lazy or wanted to save some money on food. The rooms itself were very small and quiet dirty, but after a clean up and some decorating one quickly got used to living in the dorms. Living on campus was also a super fun experience, something we do not get in Groningen! One thing to keep in mind however - hot water will only work once every so often and you will usually have to take cold showers.

Culture

This is where it all comes together and the reason you should go to India, you will have an insane experience. All the food I ate, the people I met, days on the beach in Goa or hiking the Himalayas, learning how to dance to Punjabi music, getting drunk on cheap Indian rum on the field at night because the girls are not allowed into the boys dorms - I made so many memories that I would have never wanted to miss out on and made so many friends that I will stay in contact with forever. I did not expect India to be what it was, and I was scared going in, but I can say with confidence that I had one of the best times of my life during my exchange.

Summary

If you need a big room, hygienic bathrooms, certainty in planning or just get easy 10s during your exchange, do not go to India. Coursework was extremely difficult, I spent days yelling at how crazy and unorganised the whole country is, got sick several times from some streetfood, could not find a working ATM for hours, but I do not regret going to India in even the smallest way. The experience was insane and I learned a lot, including some basic Hindi and Bollywood cinematography.