

International Exchange – Issues Report

1. Health Issues

While I was in India, I got sick 3 times in 3 months. This was something rare because before that, I was hardly ever sick. If I was, it was only once a year. So I think having an open taste to try every single food possible paid a toll on my health.

From the 3 times that I got sick, 2 of them were during terms. So I managed to go to the ISB clinic and get medication from them and took some days to rest. But the other time was when I was in my inter-term break, travelling around in India. It happened to me during a night when I was in Mumbai. I got a terrible fever and goose bumps. I decided that just waiting would be risky, to go to a hospital nearby and get a medical check-up. The doctor gave me an injection and luckily, I was feeling so much better the next day.

So, in summary, eating food in India might be a delicate issue. I suggest future exchange students to take plenty of medicine, especially for stomach aches, fever and common flu, with themselves and to go to the doctors immediately after feeling unwell. Indians have the tradition of auto-medicating themselves, but do not allow people who are not doctors to tell you what medicine to take. Go to a hospital or a clinic (private ones offer a way better service but at a higher cost) and get examined by a professional medical practitioner. Don't risk your health.

2. Indian pace of getting things done

Things move very slowly in India. This was very frustrating for me in the beginning. So you must exercise some patience even before arriving there. It might be frustrating when the Exchange Student department from ISB takes too long to reply to your emails and concerns before your trip to India. It happened to me, as I had to send several emails in order to get a reply weeks after. Once I arrived in India, I noticed that it wasn't something just of the person in charge of the exchange students, but it's part of the Indian culture.

Many times I needed to get something done by the IT or Administrative departments of ISB, they would take very long as they follow some very complicated and bureaucratic procedures. So in summary, one has to be patient when being in India. It's just part of how Indians do things. Wait for a while and things will be done eventually, at their pace. Be persistent with your requests though, as generally, Indians need to be reminded and "pushed" a bit in order to get things done.

3. Accommodation

ISB will provide you with modern and well-equipped shared student villas in its campuses. They are all well equipped with a kitchen and kitchen utensils, refrigerator living room with cable TV, wireless internet, furniture and air conditioning. The villages are very clean and new and comfortable, and they help you to have a pleasant stay at ISB. You will also a daily housekeeping service that will clean your village and your room and do the bed for you. In each villa, commonly called quads by the locals, you have 4 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms.

The villas have common social areas as well, with pool tables and other games such as card games. Also, they have financial magazines for you to read, as well as vending machines and coffee machines. The campuses also have stores where you can find and purchase first-hand products. Moreover, there are swimming pools, tennis courts, pool tables, football courts, basketball courts, free of charge bicycles (in the Hyderabad campus only) and gyms for your convenience.

Both ISB campuses have restaurants with a variety of Indian, Chinese and western dishes for you to pick from at very convenient prices. Moreover, if you want to experience more authentic Indian food, there are maids that can be hired to cook for you at your student villas at very low fees.

In summary, ISB campuses have everything for you to feel cozy and comfortable to study.

4. Some other Aspects of the Indian culture

Though India has an array of diverse cultures and languages, overall and generally speaking, Indian culture is very conservative. For instance, you won't see Indian women wearing bikinis in beaches or short skirts in public, nor couples showing any kind of public display of affection. Indians like to keep things formal in public.

This is related to the fact that most people, regardless of their faith, are religious in India. They consider spirituality an important part of their every-day life, and therefore, they like to stick to their beliefs and show that devotion in public.

Another factor in the Indian conservative culture is the strong family ties that are passed from generation to generation. It is common for 20 or even 30-year-old unmarried people to still live at their parents' house and participate actively in family traditions.

So, as a foreigner in India, you might want to observe first what people do or how they behave and try to imitate their behavior. Otherwise you might find yourself in tense situations.

Indians are usually very unpunctual. So if you are invited to an event at a given time, expect it to start later than scheduled, sometimes even one or two hours later. Again, exercise some patient and try to accommodate to your host culture.