



Indian Institute of Management – Bangalore

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Specialization - Custom

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1. Introduction

My main objective while pursuing the MBA was to expose myself to as many cultural and educational experiences as possible. Prior to going on exchange, I had the opportunity to work for a start-up in Tel Aviv, Israel as part of the Global Immersion Program, as well as work for a capital markets team in Toronto, Ontario for my summer internship. In order to complete the MBA journey, I knew I had to go on exchange. One of my biggest regrets during my undergraduate degree was not going on exchange, so I couldn't let this opportunity pass again.

There were several reasons why I chose IIM Bangalore. Firstly, it is one of the top business schools in India with some of the brightest minds in the country (less than 1% of applicants are accepted). Secondly, growing up as a first-generation Indian immigrant in the Yukon, I wasn't exposed to the traditional Indian childhood. Although I have visited India several times, I never had the chance to really explore the country other than the state of Punjab where my family is from. Thus, having the chance to live and study in one of the fastest growing cities in the world really excited me. Additionally, I knew I could leverage this experience and establish a network in a country that will not only be the most populous country in the world but also one of the largest economies in the not so distant future.

*Please note that I took a large number of quantitative courses so my classroom experience is based on that. The level of competition, style of teaching and overall classroom experience would be much different for someone who took non-quantitative courses.

2. Orientation

Upon arriving in Bangalore, I took an Uber to the campus, which is around 44km away or approx. 1.5 hours, due to its notoriously bad traffic. My suggestion is to hop in an Uber or Ola (India's homegrown Uber), as it is extremely convenient and much cheaper than a taxi (should cost around 900 to 1200 rupees). When you arrive on campus, you check in at the gate with security and then proceed to the hostel office where you will fill out a few forms and receive your dorm room key. There is a buddy assigned to you shortly after you've been accepted for the exchange, however, I had very little contact with him as I preferred to figure it out on my own. But in any case, if you want help upon arrival, I have no doubt that your assigned buddy would be more than happy to help.

The official exchange orientation didn't happen until 2 weeks after we all arrived, which was a bit late considering most of the students figured everything out by then. From the start, there is very little interaction with the program coordinators, which isn't always a bad thing in India. But, the Student Exchange Committee really does an amazing job of ensuring everyone is taken care of and host a variety of different events/parties to ensure that there is ample opportunity

to mingle with your classmates. The student clubs at IIM are incredible and they do a great job of inviting all the exchange students to their events.

3. Courses and Registration

At the beginning of June, students received a document with all the potential courses offered for the fall term. However, the official course offerings were not sent until mid-July. The registration works on a bidding system, and is not the most user friendly. Before the official bidding round, there is a pre-bidding round which is used to determine the demand per class as well as the class times (classes with the most demand get the best days and times). They provide the results to you before the official bidding round so you can bid accordingly. Essentially, there are 3 rounds where you are given 1000 points to allocate across your potential courses. With the results that are provided to you from the pre-bidding round, you bid accordingly (ie. If a course is in high demand, you will want to bid 300+). My suggestion to any incoming exchange students is to look at the classes that are in high demand and try to get in any of those. There is a reason for why they are in high demand (most likely great professor, or interesting topic regarding India's history or culture). Unfortunately, I took a lot of quantitative courses that were the least in demand and as a result were on Friday and Saturday (Yes, I had class 10am to 6pm on Friday and Saturday). Majority of exchange students decided to choose courses on two days, either Monday and Tuesday or Friday and Saturday. If I could go back, I would have opted for the courses on Monday and Tuesday instead of Wednesday to Saturday.

The caliber of courses at IIM B is quite high, as they have some of the best professors in India teaching there. The courses are generally the same level of difficulty as UBC, however, I'd say it is much tougher to get an A at IIM B than at UBC as the competition is much higher. Also, the quantitative courses are quite difficult as majority of the students come from an engineering background so the professors dive much deeper into the theoretical components. My advice for any incoming student is to take the courses that are not offered by UBC instead of finance course like I did. You will enjoy learning much more about India and its history/culture than deriving finance formulas.

4. Teaching

The style of teaching at IIM B is quite different than at UBC. Overall, the caliber of classes was quite high, however, the way the classes are taught can be different. At UBC, professors encourage discussion and are open to being challenged, however, IIM B it is the opposite. The hierarchical status that is prevalent across India can be seen in the classroom. Majority of the teachers do not like to be challenged and can get quite defensive if you don't agree with their views. Therefore, the lectures can be really boring as there is minimal interactional

between professor and the students, especially the quantitative courses. It was interesting to see the different level of professionalism in the classroom. For example, students would only call the professor “sir”, and the only way they contacted the professor after class was through the class representative, yet at the same time you would see half the class with their heads down sleeping during a lecture.

The material is generally covered at the same pace/volume as UBC. The majority of my classes were lectures and projects with very little class participation marks, however, lots of the non-quant courses had more weight towards case studies and class participation. The way that most of the quant courses are designed at IIM B are exams and group projects, so most of my courses had very little homework on a weekly basis. The grading breakdown was usually a combination of two of the following: 50% midterm/50% final/50% group project.

The quality of professors varied from subject to subject. On one end of the spectrum, I had a professor who worked at Goldman Sachs in New York for majority of his career and was an excellent teacher. On the other end, I had a professor who was a pure academic and was teaching derivatives in a language that no one could comprehend (class average for midterm was 50% and final was 35%). Luckily, grading is relative and it is really hard to fail, especially as an exchange student.

5. Languages Courses - N/A

6. Campus Facilities

IIM Bangalore's campus is a 100 acres oasis located in south Bangalore. The school was designed by a famous Indian architect, who has received numerous awards for the design. The library was under construction while I was there so it was not the best spot to study. However, there are several areas outside the new classrooms that are great to study. In addition, every hostel room has a desk and ample of room to do work. If you require a computer to work on, there are several labs with lots of computers available. They also have a new state of the art Finance/Bloomberg facility which is quite impressive.

IIM Bangalore's campus is extremely safe. They have security guards located around the campus 24/7 and you are required to show your student ID every time you come into campus.

7. International Students

There is an office for International Students, however, I had very limited interaction with them.

8. Housing Facilities

All students attending IIM Bangalore are provided housing on campus. There are two hostel blocks commonly referred to as the New and Old block. When you first arrive on campus, they will randomly assign you a dorm room. All the dorm rooms are a 5-minute walk to the hostel mess (cafeteria), so from a location standpoint they are both good. The dorm rooms are equipped with a single bed (bed sheet, blanket and pillow are provided), a study table and chair, and a closet for your clothes. The major difference between the new blocks and old blocks is that the rooms in the new blocks are slightly bigger and they have access to their own balcony. The bathrooms are shared with people in your hostel block wing, and are equipped with a laundry machine that you can use for free. However, there is laundry service available on campus where you can drop off your clothes and pick them up the following day for a very cheap price (full load of laundry cost anywhere between 200-500 rupees).

As part of your hostel fees, you pay for food at the hostel mess for 3 months (150 rupees/C\$3 a day). The “Mess” serves breakfast from 7-10, lunch from 12-30 to 3, snacks from 4-6 and dinner from 7:30 – 9:30. For \$3.0 a day, you won’t find a better deal. The food is a bit spicy and can get repetitive at times but there are other options available on campus too. For example, there is Mustard Café, which is 50 meters away, where you can use your student card (or cash) to buy coffee or western food. It is a bit more expensive, but still relatively cheap compared to Vancouver (250 rupees max for coffee and food). In addition, there is a canteen located by the classrooms that sells a variety of different Indian food at a cheap price (Chicken rolls for 70 rupees are to die for). There is also a night canteen that is opens from 10pm to 4am (you’d be surprised to see how many people are up at 3 am eating).

There is a “Big Bazaar” located just outside the campus walls (10 minute walk from dorms) where you can buy household goods and groceries at a cheap price. Keep in mind that there is nowhere to cook the food, so you’ll most likely just buy snacks and fruit. There are also several nice restaurants within a 10-minute walk from campus where you can buy delicious food and get a drink for a reasonable price. When comparing to Vancouver, food and drinks are cheap. If you were to go out for dinner and have an alcoholic beverage at a decent restaurant, expect to pay around 500-1000 rupees.

9. Costs/ Expenses

When you pay for your hostel/mess fees in June you are essentially paying for housing for 3 months, food at the mess every day (4 meals a day), and an additional 10,000 rupees, which is loaded on to your student card to spend at the different canteens/cafes on campus. The total cost for all this was equivalent to around ~\$1,050 CAD. So, when comparing to life in Vancouver, it is extremely cheap!

****1 CAD = ~50 Rupees**

- A. Accommodation: Total cost for the full 3 months is 20,000 rupees (CAD\$400)
- B. Textbooks: If there are any required textbooks for your classes, the school will provide them for free. They are included in your tuition fees, so there is no additional cost.
- C. Local transportation: The best way to get around the city is with Uber/Ola as they are very convenient, cheap and safe. For example, a one hour ride would cost around 400 rupees (C\$8). Also, you are able to get Tuk Tuk's right outside campus, which are great for short rides, but you will be required to negotiate a price, resulting in higher fares than Uber/Ola. Nonetheless, a ride to restaurants or the mall near campus is around 100-200 rupees (C\$2-4).
- D. Food/Groceries: As mentioned previously, you pay 25,000 rupees (C\$450) upfront for 4 meals a day at the cafeteria. In addition, you load 10,000 rupees (\$200) upfront on to your student card, which is used to pay for food at other vendors on campus. Thus, if you were to stay on campus the whole time and not travel you would not spend more than 35,000 rupees. This is likely the case for Indian students as they are busy with school and other extracurricular activities, however, exchange students tend to spend much more as they travel and go out for food much more. For example, I probably spent around 10,000 rupees (C\$200)/month eating at nice restaurants around the city.
- E. Other: The most expensive thing about the exchange program is travelling. Although much cheaper than traveling in Canada or Europe, it still can add up. During the exchange, I was able to travel to 4 different states and the costs varied quite a bit but here is a breakdown of the costs.
 - a. Flights: 2000 to 6000 rupees for a one-way ticket
 - b. Bus: 400 to 1200 rupees for a one- way ticket
 - c. Hostel: 400 to 900 rupees for a bed in a shared 6 to 14-person room
 - d. Hotel: 900 to 3000 rupees for a decent 2-person room
 - e. Food: 200 to 400 rupees for a delicious Indian meal at a restaurant

10. Student Health Services:

There is a health clinic on campus that is open 24/7. The school doctor is only there from 8 to 5 on the weekdays but there is a nurse on staff that can help you if the doctor is not around. I visited the clinic once when I was fighting a cold, and the nurse gave me some medication at no cost. For more serious matters, they will send you to the Apollo Hospital, one of the best hospital in the area, which is only 500 meters away.

11. Social Events:

It seemed like every week one of the clubs had a big event at “L-Square”, a large area between the hostel blocks. There were a variety of events held here and in Indian fashion they all included a combination of singing and dancing. The local students love it when exchange students join and are highly encouraged to get involved in any events/clubs that may interest them. One of the best events held during exchange was for Diwali, a popular Hindu festival that symbolizes the spiritual victory of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance.



As India's pub capital, Bangalore has a lot of different micro-breweries to check out. So, on the weekends, the exchange students would usually get together and go to Indira Nagar, a lively dining and nightlife hub of Bangalore. More often than not we would go to a restaurant for dinner than pub hopping around the area.

Given all students live on campus and eat at the same spot every day, it was extremely easy to meet new friends at IIM. Also, there are many different events/parties where you get to meet fellow exchange/Indian students. The Indian students are some of the nicest people you will meet and will really go out of their way to help out exchange students. I would highly recommend spending as much time with the Indian students as you can as they are all extremely smart individuals with such interesting backgrounds. The fact that most students

spent 99% of their time on campus, it was very easy to build relationships and meet new people on a regular basis.



12. Career Services: We were not given access to the career services at IIM.

13. Sports/ Recreation:

The campus has great sports facilities located just behind the hostel blocks. There is a brand new outdoor basketball, volleyball and tennis court that are kept in great condition. Also, there is a sports complex that has 4 badminton courts, two squash courts, a swimming pool, a music room and a yoga room (2 yoga classes held every day for free). Essentially everything is new and in great condition other than the gym, which is extremely dated and small (I believe they are working on building a new one soon). There is no cost to use any of these facilities, and you are able to rent the required equipment by giving your hostel room key as collateral. However, some of the equipment is getting old so if you are a badminton/squash player it might be good to bring your own racket.

There are IIM Bangalore sports clubs that practice 3-5 times a week and exchange students are encouraged to come out and join. There were several “friendly” matches that the exchange students organized against the IIM Football team.



14. Study Tours/Field trips:

There were no mandatory study tours/field trips. However, I did take a Social Entrepreneurship class where students travelled with group members to other parts of the country to visit the NGO they were working on. Although this wasn't required, it was definitely encouraged. In addition, there were different clubs that organized field trips to certain areas in the state of Karnataka. For example, the hiking club organized several day/night hikes for 50+ people. It would usually last 6-8 hours round trip and cost approx. 1000 rupees for transportation and food.

15. What to bring

Essentially everything you require will be provided or can be purchased on campus or at the Big Bazaar (right across the street). But I would encourage people to bring their own medication bag with all their go to drugs. It is extremely easy to get any sort of medication in India; however, the doctor/pharmacist may prescribe you medication that is deemed too strong for a minor cold in the western world. Also, make sure to bring a sleeping bag liner for your travels outside of Bangalore! I used it quite a bit throughout the 3+ month journey.

16. General Impressions

If you are considering India as an exchange destination, you are clearly a curious and brave individual. Personally, I don't consider India as a country but a continent as every state is so different from each other. The 29 states all have a different language, food, culture and history which will leave you captivated from start to end. India will challenge you in more ways than you ever thought but will also make you a better person as a result.

The most rewarding aspect of my exchange experience was the friendships I built with both the exchange students as well as Indian students. After speaking with the other Sauder exchange students about their experiences, I can definitely say that I was able to build stronger and more connections due to the fact that IIM exchange students spent 99% of their time together. Most other exchange students live off campus and are only at school when they have classes whereas students at IIM eat, sleep, study, exercise and hang out on campus. As a result, you get to meet more people and spend more quality time with each other throughout the semester.

There weren't any real big disappointments for me other than a few of the classes I selected. As mentioned previously, majority of the students are highly intelligent engineers so I would advise against taking any quant heavy classes (i.e. Fixed Income & Derivatives). There are so many interesting classes that IIM offers and if I could go back I would have opted for one of those instead.

All in all, it was an amazing experience and I really hope other exchange students from the MBA program take the opportunity to experience life at one of the best schools in India. You will not be disappointed with your experience I can promise you that! Also, you will come back to Canada with more memories and money left in your bank account than your fellow exchange classmates in Europe!