

# A German Girl in Kerala



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India, land of spices and saris, Bollywood and IT – this was everything I knew when I took the plane from Frankfurt, Germany, to Thiruvananthapuram, India. Of course I had read many books about India during my studies and watched some Hindi films, but being actually there was something totally different.

I didn't get a cultural shock as many of my friends told me, for the first I was much impressed looking down to Kerala from the plane. Never in my life would I have imagined a place so green and a beach so long and when I got off the plane, so hot, too.

In contrast to most of the other foreigners who come here to make holidays I started working for a few months which means, staying at an Indian home stay, being every day involved in the life and culture of the Indian way of life. Leaving the

German tradition behind me, get used to a completely new world – this is what I call a challenge.

From the first moment I was fascinated by the traffic. So many people, apparently without any system on the road and no accidents – this is unthinkable in Germany, where the traffic is strictly regulated. Sometimes three or four people on one bike, no helmets, the never ending sound of the horns was the first impression I got here.

The next one was the dust floating everywhere in the air. Now that I'm here for a few weeks I know that there is no way to escape him. He's just there, air, skin, clothes, darkens the daylight, clouds the colour of the green landscape and makes it sometimes unable to see the stars in the evening.

The first weeks are over and I got used to most of the things as for example the Indian food. Germany and rice is like China and French potatoes and only a few people care about rice; it's only a boring side dish which you eat sometimes in a month. Here nearly everything is made of rice, it's still unbelievable in my opinion, how many variations of rice exist that I never have tasted before.

Another thing is going everyday by bus as a German girl, always an experience and maybe the 'cultural shock' my friends were talking about. Never in my life could I have imagined that so many people being together in one place, staring at me, obviously a foreigner and the only foreigner in any bus, while I could hardly breathe and desperately try to find out where I am. Maybe the day will come when I'm sitting relaxed in a bus, but for the moment I'm not sure about it.

Always fascinating is the rain. Of course there is rain in Germany but there's no comparison to the rain in Kerala. As somebody told me and I think he's pretty right, the rain here is like a symphony. I spent hours just watching the heavy summer rain during the lightning, walking around, listening and enjoying the raindrops falling on my head. 'It's not like monsoon' I was told. So I have another experience to wait for: the monsoon, the Big Brother of the heavy summer rains. Also it will be very wet it's the first time in my life I'm looking forward to rain! If somebody would have told me this before I would not have believed him.

The Indian way of life is in many ways very different from the way I used to know from Germany. Against Germany where it is hard to find something old and traditional although it exists, India, especially Kerala, still has the strong believe

in customs and tradition, but also a very high-rising in tourism, movies and industry. I think I'm lucky to take a look at both sides and the 'real' Indian life, not as a tourist but as a part of it for a few months. To deal with this is not easy, anyway. Particularly find out what is allowed and what is forbidden and is in my sight very stressful and still a challenge but always an experience. ●●



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