

Incredible India...

My adventure started early in the morning when I arrived at 4:30am at Trivandrum Airport in India. After filling out some forms and passing the immigration desk I thought I was ready to face India in its whole. But just when I stepped out of the protected airport halls, I realised that I had not a clue about the country I decided to live in for two months. It was humid, hot, noisy and full of people. I was alone, thirsty and didn't know who to trust. So I decided to change some money first and get some water to drink. After this refreshment I took a taxi to the couchsurfing family I was supposed to stay with because the 'Charity Center' I was supposed to go to didn't longer exist for foreign volunteers. I stayed in Kerala for 2 days and flew further to Chennai in Tamil Nadu to be volunteer in the orphanage project 'WIDE Children's Home' in Tiruvannamalai instead. In Chennai I arrived at noon and Kumari, the directing manager was already waiting for my to take me to the home. After four or five hours driving we arrived at the home and when I stepped out of the car, the kids were immediatly running towards me and asking how I was and what my name was. What a brilliant welcoming that was! After some time it was the first time to have some meal in the home: rice and some nice curry. The first weeks I shared my room with Julia, another volunteer from Germany. She was the one who had to stand me saying the rest of the day how much I loved being here and how great it is to be in India with these incredible nice family and children. The next day I were eager for the kids comming home from school. We had a great time. We didn't understand every word but had so much fun showing each other games and dancing to funny songs we were singing.



The next days were just easy life. In the mornings we did some fundraising and worked on the website we created. The uploading of photos and writing of textes started to be our usual start of the day. After 4pm the first children arrived from school and we were happy to have them in the house

to play. Because there was no school bus, Xavier had to manage to drive the almost 30 children to school by rickshaw. So he had to go for three to four rides to get all the children to their different schools.



After a while the moments of bliss were clouded by the awareness that these children have great talents but will probably never be assisted in their talent. There was one boy who was an amazing dancer and another one who could sing to make you want to cry because his voice was so deeply moving. Most of these kids had such a sad background story and we could only hope that they have a brighter future. Together with the other volunteer Josephine we thought about how spoiled some German children are and pushed to success even if they have no talent at all. It made us really sad to see this unfairness and in some moments I felt just too paralysed to think of changing anything at all. Kumari who lived just on the upper level with her husband Xavier and her daughter Priya and son Prince, convinced us that she is doing her best for the children's life and I also could feel that she was so close to the children, just like a mother. Because it was a Christian home, the children were taught to pray each day to God and Jesus that their dreams may come true one day.

During my stay I discovered how many requirements and rules the government had created to run an orphanage to keep corruption away from the children. But while knowing that Kumari and Xavier were giving their best and had to struggle so much to achieve all these rules by spending much money to computer programmes and tuition to list all the financial in and outgoings, it didn't seem right to me. Of course it is better to control the financial belongings but every time I saw Kumari haven't slept much at night because she had to deal with new duties, I felt very sorry that there is put so much weight of trouble on her just because she wanted to help these children. Though I always offered my help, most of the times she refused it and wanted us to feel as her guests. But there were some things we could do in the household, just like doing our washing. It became a ritual for Josephine and me to walk up the stair to the roof top. After soaking the laundry we washed it with the piece of 'rin' soap just like the children always did. It was so much fun and as

a mystery to Kumari and Xavier we enjoyed this easy way of handwashing.



Kumari also encouraged us to visit several places. So Josi and I went to the nearby cities Puducherry and Vellore but we were always happy to have a place to come home to and would appreciate even more to stay with the family and children.

During my stay I learned so much of Indian culture. I was so happy to stay with the family and not just travelling as a tourist to places where you don't really understand what you see. The children taught me some words of Tamil, nursery rhymes and fun games you can play with the easiest toys, just like rocks, old car tyres and rubberbands. Also building little shops, houses and temples from bricks was very impressive.



It was so amazing to see the inner structure of the home, such as the changing authority of the older children. The responsibility included more rights but also more duties. But when it came to a fight, the older children were always there to see what happened and to adjust the trouble.

These two months mean so much to me and I definitely want to come back to Tiruvannamalai some day to see what happened to the kids and how they developed. I am so grateful that I was able to do this experience. Not only to see the children's way to love their life and be sure that they have a

good home but furthermore to be aware that the German way of life sometimes is too much luxury. Sometimes it just does a mat on the ground and some simple curry to have the best time of your life. To have beloved people around is way more important to make me comfortable than the amount of money I have to spend. Moments like this are not for sale, they are given as a present if you are really interested in learning from other persons and be open to new experiences.

