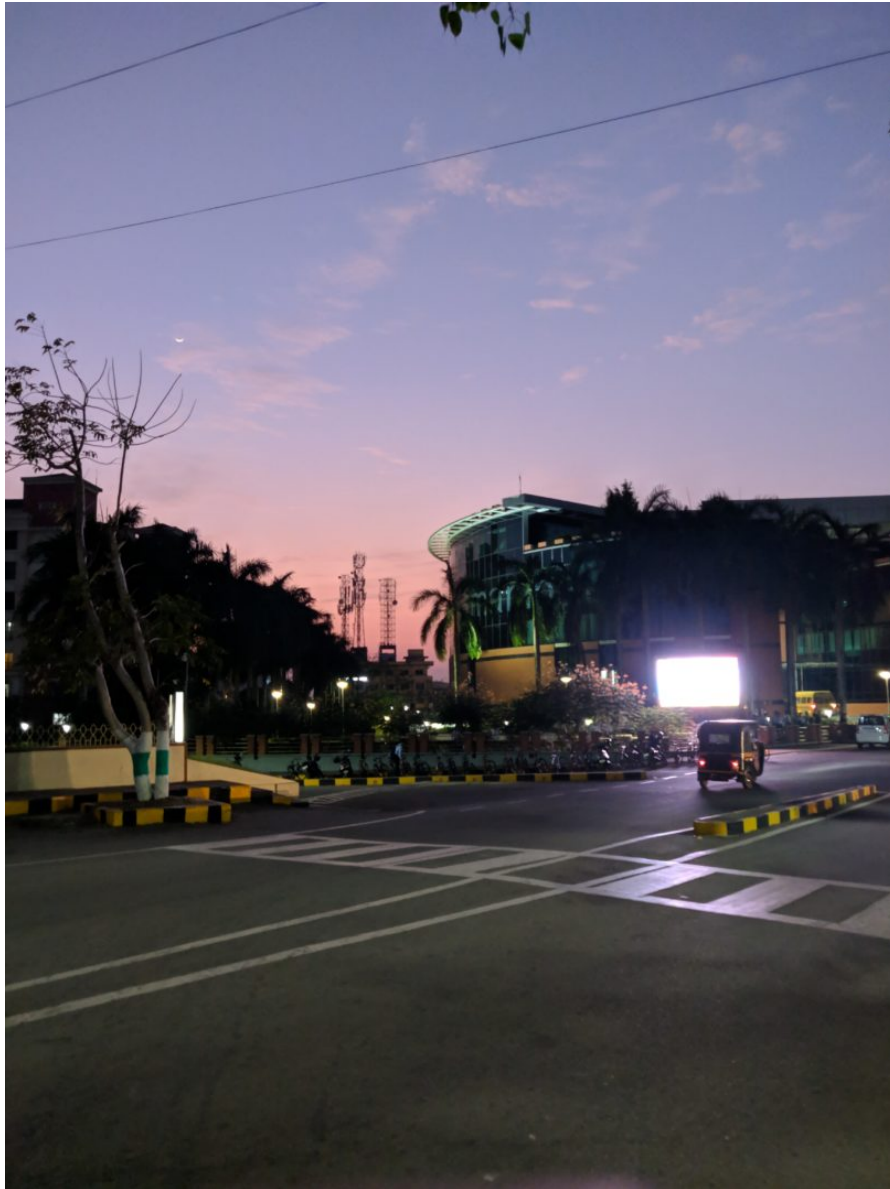


Midnight Takeouts and Borrowed Umbrellas

There is no dearth of choice regarding engineering colleges in India. Every year over a hundred thousand confused freshers seek admission into the best possible colleges. For the lucky few who end up in Manipal, this place proves to be unlike any other. After much deliberation and enquiries, the one thing that eventually persuaded me to come to MIT was a rather grand claim made by a school senior, who is currently an alumnus of the college. He said that coming to Manipal was the best decision of his life, and as my first year here comes to a close, I think I can wholeheartedly back that claim.

While I made countless memories in my eight and a half months at the college, the first few days that I spent in Manipal remain the most cherished. From staying up late with my hostel-mates playing bluff, exploring MFC (that's Manipal Frizzled Chicken, for the uninitiated) and TC (Tiger Circle), to waking each other up for those early morning classes, we did it all. It would be unfair if I did not mention that like most other freshers, my early days in Manipal were marked with the infamously unpredictable monsoons, so carrying an umbrella at all times was a must.

My first experience in an MIT classroom came during the orientations and through my TG (Teacher Guardian); a concept which is novel in MIT. The classrooms themselves threw me back a year as they bore an uncanny and uninvited resemblance to all my previous coaching classes. Nonetheless, we went on to make some insane memories in these rooms in the months to come. The many positives about the college are often left undiscussed among the more sensationalist and scandalous rumours surrounding the town. What makes the town of Manipal unique, however, is its culture and its people.



The MAHE Administrative Building.

Being a university town, a majority of Manipal's population is comprised of students and is a true melting pot of cultures from all around the country. One meets and interacts with people from all over India and even the world, and lives the fabled college life to its fullest. The hostels are far better than what one expects from an engineering college. A little pro-tip for boys would be to opt for the seventeenth block over the sixteenth, as the majority of MIT students reside in the former whereas the latter also has a few of the DOC and FOA students. Another helpful advice would be to opt for the x15/x16 rooms as they are significantly more spacious than the others. The caretakers at sixteenth block can be a bit strict

with the freshers but they hardly ever give anyone a difficult time aside from imposing the perm. The seventeenth block, however, has the most relaxed and friendly caretakers. While an 'in-time' might seem like a frustrating rule, especially with the freedom allowed in all other aspects of the college, it is there for a reason and only serves to safeguard the student populace.



The view from Block 16.

Aside from the mess, people mostly eat out at various local eateries, which are all hardly ten minutes away from the campus. Manna Roll, MFC, Red Kitchen, and Hit and Run are relatively inexpensive and sustained me through an entire semester during my abstinence-for-the-mess phase. Shawarmas are perhaps the most consumed item on the menu and are present at every corner of the town. A growing trend has been ordering food online, with Manipal attaining the highest order

frequency in all of India, through Zomato (keep an eye out for the 50% off offers). Despite the various offers one comes across while ordering online, the restaurants in Manipal are relatively much cheaper than in other cities across the country.

What makes Manipal unique is it's geography, with many beaches and hills at an easily accessible distance. Weekend getaways are typical in the even semester with multiple bike rental services also available. It isn't advisable to venture near the coast during the odd semester, however, as the weather is less forgiving with a six-month onslaught of unpredictable monsoons.



The road leading to the Student Plaza through the Academic Area.

As a piece of parting advice, I'd like to say that it's the

people that make a place truly memorable and some of my cherished memories are not around the town itself, but all the friends I made. I remember one unfateful morning when a close friend had to rush uphill to the academic block in a record 8 minutes to make it in time for a lecture, failing which, he would have had to drop the course. We had stayed up late into the night (morning, rather) playing Fifa, and the sorry soul had to brush in the lecture hall's washroom the next day. A video of him caught in the act made rounds on Whatsapp all through the following week. My roommate and I were conspirators of another such marvellous display when we made the climb to the Academic Block in under twelve minutes to save our semester. Needless to say, we were both in our pyjamas and were fresh out of our beds. Neither of us remembers what lecture we had that morning, nor do we recall what was taught that week; but the image of us trying to scramble up *Temple Run* in our slippers will be with us for a long time.



Ritviz performing at Revels '19.

All this still doesn't quite encapsulate all that Manipal has

to offer. Liberating and welcoming, Manipal embraces one and all and is a feeling one has to experience for themselves to truly understand it. With the vacations coming to a close, MIT prepares to welcome a new batch of freshers to this chaotic yet serene lifestyle, as I prepare to survive another semester of barely reaching class on time in my slippers.

Featured Image Credits: Rishi Raj