

Leavin' on a jet plane: Hyderabad to Cochin

Cochin, Kerala, India - February 13, 2008

Amy:

We spent most of the morning getting ready for our trip to Cochin: packing, making final homestay/hotel reservations in Cochin, etc. Madhumanti prepared breakfast and lunch for us, which we enjoyed – it turned out we didn't have to eat the rest of the day!

Madhumanti picked Akanksha up from school, and Brent played with her for a while while I finished making trip plans. He was excited to see that Akanksha and his friend, Steve, share the same favorite show, Astroboy.

At around 2:30 p.m, Tapas and Madhumanti's driver, Akbar, drove us to the airport. We were still completely confused by the streets in Hyderabad, which seem to be a maze with no pattern or reason. We drove past a coffee shop chain, Coffee Day, and Minerva's Coffee House (where we had eaten when we had our tour of Hyderabad) but realized that it must be a chain because it was a different location than the one where we had eaten. Hyderabad is the "City of Pearls" and there are many pearl shops. There was even one in the airport!

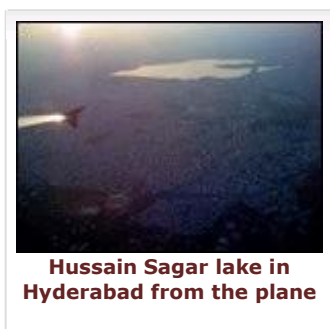
We drove on a "flyover" – a highway which is on pillars above the highway. I had thought that a flyover was a road to the airport, but Madhumanti explained that flyer is any term for a freeway.

We arrived at the airport (after duly impressing Akbar with our 3 Hindi phrases) and went inside to check in. The airports in India have luggage security scanners at the entrance, but we were only taking carry-on luggage, so we didn't have to scan anything this time. We checked in, received our boarding passes, and went through security to a waiting area. The waiting area at the airport (the domestic terminal) was for all airlines, JetAir, SpiceJet, Jet-Lite (or something like that), Kingfisher, GoAir, Air India, Deccan Airlines, and Paramount. (There may have been other airlines, but I can't remember) We liked the names of the airlines :)

We sat down and Brent wandered around and brought back some tea. English tea, not chai – English tea is also common in India, regular tea with milk and sugar. We heard an announcement that our plane was delayed an hour, so we went upstairs to a less-crowded waiting room that Brent had found during his wandering, and sat down there.

We flew Air Deccan, and our plane was almost completely full, compared with the almost-empty Kingfisher Airlines. Tapas had told us that Kingfisher owns Air Deccan, which is the cheaper alternative

airline, like United and Ted.



Hussain Sagar lake in Hyderabad from the plane

We landed at Cochin Airport in Kerala, went outside, and saw a sign that read “Hotel Arches welcomes Amy Newman”. Yay! (I had arranged with the hotel beforehand for pickup from the airport) It was great to avoid trying

to find and hassle with a cab, especially in an unfamiliar place.

The weather in Cochin when we landed was hot and humid, which was a bit of a shock. The ride to the hotel took about an hour, as the airport is 45 kilometers outside the city. The driver was as crazy and fast as other drivers in the north, much to our surprise. We had read that Kerala was the laid back, chill place in India, but maybe not driving. From what we could see at night, the area was tropical and lush, with coconut trees and many lagoons and bridges. More of the signs were in English, and we passed several Christian churches, more than we had seen the entire time in India. (Kerala is mostly Christian) There was a curious site, too, on some of the churches which was an encased Jesus in glass in front of the church – we saw about 3 of these.

We drove through several towns on the way to our hotel, which was in the fort section of Cochin. We were excited to see a hammer and sickle b/c we had heard that the state of Kerala had communist leanings. The fort section was different than any other place we had seen in India and much quieter & cleaner.



welcome to Arches!

Our hotel was beautiful, from the inside and out!

(Thanks,

tripadvisor!) We were greeted at the

door by a man from the hotel, who gave us both flower garland necklaces and a coconut to drink!

<http://www.hotelarches.com/>



Arches Hotel in Ft. Cochin

We were shown upstairs to our room, which was lovely, with Keralan cherry wood and white walls, t.v, fridge, shower, air conditioning, fan, and 2 windows.

I had developed a rash the day before, which had gotten worse on the plane, so Brent and I wandered outside to look for a medical shop. We found one a few blocks away, and bought hydrocortisone cream. At the medical shop was a deaf man, who helped us buy the cream and told us that the pills that that pharmacist



Brent showing our airport sign

recommended were not good. I was able to communicate a little in sign language, and his mime skills (and pen and paper) were helpful. He told us about his ex- girlfriend in Oregon who broke his heart, and asked us some questions as well.

We walked back to the hotel and I put on the cream, which helped ease the itchiness of the rash. We watched t.v. and fell asleep in our comfy beds.

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