MY TRAVELS IN INDIA

6/6/2013-8/8/2013

A CEO Mumbai Story

Two Months. Two Suitcases. One Unforgettable Summer. Special thanks to everyone who helped me on my excursion: the staff at the Center for Career Education, the Passport to India Program by the US State Department, Citigroup, the Aditya Birla Group, AZB and Partners, and my fellow interns!
Arrival Week (June 6-9):

It’s hot in India (well, duh). I expected tropical, humid, damp weather, but nothing quite like this. I timidly stepped out of the plane exhausted from a twenty hour flight, quite literally feeling out what the conditions were like on the other side of the world. The experience walking out of the cramped economy class seat was interesting to say the least. The walk in between the plane and the airport caused my t-shirt to soak in the Mumbai humidity, as well as the smells and flavors of India. There would be plenty more of that in the coming weeks, but the only thing I could think about was moving into what I would call home for the next two months. Upon arriving at the baggage claim, I saw just a small portion of the country’s innumerable population, making the airport experience a nightmare. At the end of ninety minutes, I finally retrieved my bags and ventured into the Indian heat a second time, bewildered by the throng of clamoring taxi drivers and car service providers. I found my man in a short minute and was soon carted off to the Columbia arranged housing. Collapsing onto a bed created for a man of average Indian height (several inches too short), I closed my eyes to my new home and unpacked bags. India was to be explored properly the next day.

Together with two other interns, I proceeded to make what would be the first of many trips to the adjacent neighborhood: Bandra. There, I was introduced to Indian food for the first time at a restaurant that served completely vegetarian cuisine. Called Elco’s, the restaurant was full of regular customers, one of whom helped our troupe of interns pick from a menu that was as foreign as the food itself. The menu may as well have been written in Sanskrit, because after ten minutes of unsuccessful deciphering, a fellow patron picked five dishes for us to sample to our pleasant surprise. Tasting food with names such as pani puri, stuffed paratha, roti, and butter naan, I walked away from the restaurant feeling a little queasy (again, an experience that I would revisit many times during this trip). Nonetheless, it was a productive second day as we were
introduced to local transportation in auto-rickshaws and black taxicabs. By the end of the weekend, all eight interns had arrived in Mumbai and were exchanging hellos and numbers in due time. There was a brief informational orientation hosted by the Columbia Global Center located at Express Towers, the same building in which I would be working for the summer. Incredibly helpful, the staff at the CGC told us how to navigate Mumbai and gave us a few travel suggestions as well. And after a tiring day, all the interns decided to get some dinner all together for the first time. The jet lag affected me the worst of all the interns, apparently. While some had an arsenal of sedatives and caffeinated drinks to combat the time zones, I was found sleeping in a rickshaw (very dangerous given the fact there are no doors or seatbelts) going to Bandra during one particular outing. At the restaurant, I half-finished my meal and nearly fell asleep on my plate in the middle of my seven friends in a relatively public area. Soon, I closed my eyes and nodded off while sitting in the restaurant booth, paying no mind to my fellow diners. While no one attempted to draw on my face, a few of them snapped a cell phone picture or two. I kindly asked that all of these pictures not make it to Facebook. So far and to my knowledge, none have surfaced.

Week 1 (June 10-16):

The law firm: AZB and Partners. Bahram N. Vakil, senior partner, the “B” of AZB, the man who personally interviewed me for this summer internship, sat 10 feet away from me in his corner office. He showed me around the firm, introduced me to the associates and partners, and paired me with one of the newer partners, Nandish Vyas. The first few days were slow; I became acquainted with the customs of the office, relearned Microsoft Outlook, and fought with the copy machine. Eventually, I was eased into the minutiae of corporate law in a short amount of time. For two whole days, I was assigned to a due diligence between our client, a corporate investor based in Qatar, and its investment partner, a prestigious education company handling test prep all across India. A third party, an independent investor based in Mauritius, was involved in the legal dispute on the side bringing the lawsuit into court. This winding up petition, my introduction into the world of corporate law, was an extensive and mind-numbing documentation process involving emails between the three parties. What was at stake was millions of dollars across international borders and more importantly, the internal
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corporate structure of this education company. In that same week, Nandish had wanted me to revamp the bylaws of an Indian trade union using the bylaws of a trade union based in London from the same industry.

I was very busy that week, which sort of justified my first working Saturday (!!!) at this law firm. The hours were strange as well; from Monday through Friday, all associates and interns would report for work from 10:30 AM and leave work by 8:30 PM. Every other Saturday, all employees were required to come in for work for a shorter amount of time, but the hours were rough regardless of the shortened time. This essentially made the internship feel like a sixty hour work week. Coupled with an hour-long commute by train to and from work, the adjustment to the Indian work schedule was jarring to say the least. The train, moreover, was among the worst parts of my trip to India. Overcrowded would be a laughable understatement to describe the local trains in India. While inexpensive for all commuters (a three month pass costs 5 USD), the result is an outdated, overused, and deteriorating train system. The train cars are packed with over six hundred commuters though each car is designed for 150 passengers. All of the doors are open to let the overwhelming heat out, resulting in daring attempts to catch moving trains, leaps from slowing trains, and commuters hanging out of the doors. Shoving and elbowing contests aside, the train would definitely be the least favorite part of my two months on the subcontinent.

However, the upside of that week came with the congeniality and friendliness of the Indian people. In that first week, I was treated to an expensive round of dinner and drinks paid for by the firm and my supervisors, went out on a more affordable (but still delicious) outing with the other legal interns, and explored the sights in the city of Mumbai. My new friends and I went to a bustling (and smelly) market in the downtown area as well as walked through a park called the Hanging Gardens. We saw our share of animals both on the sidewalks and in the streets, including cows and monkeys. But with just one day to recover after coming in to work on Saturday, the first weekend in India was relatively quiet and a chance to sleep away the hours of paperwork from the previous week. India and just Mumbai in particular had much more to show me, but with seven weeks
left, I was in no rush to explore. Not yet, anyway.

**Week 2 (June 17-23):**

The commute is getting a little more manageable, but still quite adventurous in terms of timing my jumps to make the accelerating train cars. The people on the train are usually silent, and many of them stare awkwardly at the young Asian American sitting amongst them, if only for a few seconds. But the hour-long train ride from Santacruz, where the Columbia housing is situated, and Nariman Point, downtown Mumbai where the businesses lie, often puts me to sleep so I didn’t notice the furtive glances in my direction. Work was starting to pick up as the associates grew more comfortable giving me more challenging projects. This week, I was assigned to the litigation department and had a chance to go to the Bombay High Court, the appeals court assigned for the state of Maharashtra. Our firm had a designated official counsel, a man that would speak on behalf of AZB and Partners in front of the magistrate. The rest of the litigation department was full of litigators, lawyers charged with researching the relevant facts of any particular case. Along with two associates from litigation, I followed the official counsel to the Bombay High Court and took notes on an insolvency case that our client was involved in. Our client, an Indian construction company represented by an agent, had wanted to cancel an oral contract for the purchase of shares to an investor. Already, one installment of payments had been made, albeit only for a small percentage of the shares. Presumably, our client had found a higher price for the shares and had wanted to terminate the agreement.

On my end of things, I was assigned to legal research of Indian law regarding oral agreements and their binding effects on a company. My supervising associate had wanted me to discover a Supreme Court case in which the Court held that an oral agreement made by an agent of the company cannot be binding on the entire company. The search took longer than several hours, and in fact detained me at the office until 12:00 am that week. The exhaustion from the work hours prevented my seeing the final verdict, which was ultimately in our client’s favor.

On the bright side for that week, I was able to see more of the city and learn a little more about the culture in India. In India, New Delhi is considered “the city of sights” whereas
Mumbai is considered “the city of stories.” Similar to the relationship between Washington, DC and New York back in the United States, India’s dynamic metropolises share roles between mass culture and political power. Mumbai is home to Bollywood, India’s rapidly growing, multibillion dollar music/theater/television headquarters. Nariman Point, the place where I worked this summer, represented the downtown, “Old Money” district of Mumbai (Wall Street). In Lower Parel, the equivalent of New York’s midtown, Mumbai housed quickly growing construction projects that already housed numerous consulting, banking, and trading firms. Finally, the “suburbs” where I was staying in Santacruz and near Bandra housed Mumbai’s “New Money,” home to many of India’s rising middle class workers.

To conclude the weekend, I was able to experience a taste of Bollywood firsthand. Together with all of the other interns, I went to a massive Indian movie theater and watched Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani, a love story between a globetrotting, freelance photographer and a successful doctor confined to her practice in India. For anyone reading this journal, it is highly recommended that you experience this movie yourself.

The picture on the bottom is scene from a tradition called Holi in India, where hundreds of people will throw paint in celebration. Columbia’s HOLI, the precursor to Bacchanal, is modeled after this ancient Indian tradition.
Week 3 (June 24-30):

This was an extremely busy week! This Monday and Tuesday, I had to call out of work for a trip to New Delhi along with two other interns. The premise for the trip was an arrangement between the lovely staff at the Center for Career Education and the US State Department, who had instrumental roles in arranging our internships in India. Together with the South Asia division of the State Department, the dean of CCE put together an opportunity for three of us to go to the US-India Education Summit. Among the attendees were presidents of large universities in America, professors, State Department officials, and their Indian counterparts, including the Minister of Human Resource Development and Secretary of State John Kerry! In New Delhi, we were able to meet three other interns who were able to go to India as a result of the Passport to India program, all of whom were working at UOP Honeywell, one of the largest engineering firms worldwide. All of them were brilliant chemical engineers and on Monday night, the night before the Summit, they took us around New Delhi since they had been stationed in that city for their Honeywell internships. And on Tuesday afternoon, they and our troupe of Columbia interns were given a brief moment to speak to the officials at the meeting to relay our experiences in India. Some brief networking, exchange of business cards, and exchange of phone numbers (with the Honeywell interns) later, we were off to work again. Needless to say, the beginning of the week was so cool!

Coming back to Mumbai, there was plenty of work waiting for me at the law firm. My supervising partner, Nandish, had just begun advising a client who had wanted to create an over-the-counter (with no intermediary) derivative contract with a Russian company. The Indian company we were representing had wanted to hedge against the falling value of the rupee, India’s badly inflating currency. At the time of my internship, the rupee-dollar exchange rate was at its highest in Indian history (since India’s independence in 1947). My task was to research the basics of this currency swap into a readable format for our client, including regulations determined by the Reserve Bank of India, Russia’s central bank, and market conditions at the time. I was also charged to find out what credit risks were going to be presented to our client and how much exposure this Indian company would be susceptible to. After many Google searches and Wikipedia hunting, the project was completed for my supervisor on time and he gave me good feedback. It was after this project I realized how global this firm’s business was and more importantly, I also
discovered the world of opportunities that could be available to me under Columbia University’s banner. I was starting to feel pretty good about where I went to school.

That feeling was augmented even further as two members of CCE came to India to give all the interns a personal visit in Mumbai. The DEAN of CCE was one of the visitors, and she came to Delhi with some of us and then greeted all the interns in the following days. On Wednesday night, both the dean and a staffer from CCE treated us to a wonderfully tasty dinner in Lower Parel to ask us how our internships were going. They were incredibly personable and were genuinely interested in what our activities were; the dean herself had just come from Shanghai to meet with the other globetrotting CEO interns. On Thursday night, CCE set up a meet-and-greet with our mentors, eight carefully selected Columbia alums who were living and working in India at the time. One of the mentors was a head chef at an upscale restaurant in Mumbai, where he opened the first of its kind in all of west India. The food that we had there can still salivate my taste buds just at the thought of it. For a few hours, the interns and the mentors chatted for a while and seemed to be having a great time. My mentor in particular was a recent Columbia graduate, a triple major who decided to stick around the Columbia orbit by working at the Global Center. She was the one who gave us the orientation the first week we were in Mumbai. She also introduced me to some of the researchers from the Columbia Global Center, including a Cambridge student who was doing field work for the educational programs in rural India. And on Friday night, CCE set up a special networking event with our employers from work as well as potential employers for the following year for CEO Mumbai. I was able to see firsthand just how brilliant my fellow interns were at this event, as their employers were simply glowing about them over dinner. It was a splendid evening. Hooray for business cards!
Even the weekend was eventful. Together with three other interns, we took some time to explore downtown Mumbai. After eating breakfast at our apartment, we took trains to Colaba, a famous tourist trap for many foreigners in India. We were able to see the Gateway of India, the Taj Mahal Palace, and our first Starbucks in weeks! What was particularly entertaining about this foray was the fact that two of my friends (Caucasian females) were asked numerous times to take pictures with the Indian families who were also seeing the sights. At one point, one family asked a friend to hold a baby for a family photo in front of the Gateway of India. Thankfully, we left to go to the market in Colaba before things got out of hand (we did take the picture with them, though).
Week 4 (July 1-7):

Another week, another 50 hour grind. Luckily, the work was more than manageable and was getting increasingly more interesting as the law firm entered a busy phase. My supervisor handed me some more research to do, this time for a client from Singapore that had wanted to enter a share purchase agreement with an Indian medical supply company. The stipulations of the contract included several conditions precedent that had to be fulfilled in order for the purchase to be completed. And since the Indian medical supply company already had other institutional investors with a share of the company’s control, a new shareholders agreement had to be drafted and reviewed by the parties involved. My responsibility was to research a specific condition that had to be met in order for the transaction to be completed. Using EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization) accounting and a multiplier determined by industry experts, a company’s value could be determined using these measurements and other Generally Accepted Principles used by accountants. But to prevent a company from artificially inflating its net worth, our law firm was charged to list numerous exceptions that would be excluded from the EBITDA. The rest of the interns at the office were probably assigned to other parts of the conditions precedent, but to my knowledge, I certainly had the most fun doing the research.

This week was also the week of Independence Day, but since the majority of the people in India could care less about July 4th, our group of interns had a small celebration in one of the apartment rooms. Somehow, a few of the interns were able to find red, white, and blue streamers, balloons, and pom-poms (God only knows where to find those in Mumbai) and the decorations were soon lining the walls of our apartment. After some country songs and loud singing of the national anthem, our small gathering soon dispersed.
Over the weekend, the three Honeywell interns we met from New Delhi decided to give us a visit in Mumbai for two nights. Together with a Columbia intern, I showed them the “city of stories” and the numerous attractions all over the city. And while they were none too pleased with the amount of trash on the sidewalks (who would be?), we had an excellent time at Elephanta Island, an hour’s ferry ride away from Colaba, Mumbai. It was raining on the day we went, so the monsoon made the excursion rather…exciting. To get on the boat, we were instructed to jump from the dock to an untied boat, then jump from that boat to our departing boat. A few scary waves and seasick tourists later, we arrived on Elephanta Island. Once there, I had bought a few crackers for the trip around the island and the animals were unhappy that I neglected to offer tribute before going to the caves. Consequently, two crows flew into my head and knocked my snacks out of my hand. My friend had it even worse that day. When we reached the Elephanta Caves, a monkey grabbed onto her leg and tried to swipe her bag of drinks. A few moments later, another monkey pulled the bag out of her hand, removed the poncho and water bottles that were inside, grabbed her sealed lime soda, climbed a tree with this bounty, unsealed the bottle, and drank the soda in front of us. No harm, no foul I suppose. The caves were amazing, after all, which made us forget that a monkey had just mugged us.
Week 5 (July 8-14):

Work this week was assigned to me from a different associate in a different part of the firm. In the beginning of the week, Christina, a senior associate at the firm, asked me to help her with a leave and license agreement that our client had entered into a few months ago. At the request of this Indian company, our lawyers were instructed to find ways to terminate a license agreement arranging the habitation of a certain premises in rural India, the value of which had gone down since the client’s commencement of business. However, the contract stipulated that a security deposit be made, refundable upon the expiration of a Lock-In Period of three years. A common means of collateral in other kinds of contracts, this security deposit, valued at several hundreds of thousands of USD, was a cause of concern for our client. It was my duty to find all the elastic clauses in the contract to find ways for the Indian company to terminate the agreement prior to the expiration of the Lock-In Period as well as find a way to recover the security deposit without penalty. As I had very little experience in contract law (Indian contract law, mind you), my suggestions to Christina were creative to say the least. In the contract, it was determined that the agreement could be terminated if a dispute arising from the landlord’s obligations lasted for more than thirty days and could not be remedied. Since the landlord was completely in charge of providing electricity and water to the premises, I suggested to the associate that our client use the utilities so often that the landlord would receive a negative return on investment against the monthly lease payments our client would have to pay if the contract continued. Christina chuckled a bit after reading through my suggestions and while doubtful that there was any legal basis behind my research, agreed to forward my suggestion to the client.

On Monday night, the Columbia Global Center treated the interns to dinner and a lecture series by a Columbia political science professor who was brought over for the presentation. At the Trident Hotel, incidentally right across the street from Express Towers where I work, various Columbia alum and members of the Indian business community were invited to attend and ask questions about the political future of India. Even my boss, the Columbia alum who interviewed me for the position at AZB and Partners, the SENIOR PARTNER at this firm, came to the lecture. At times, the discussion became quite heated as there was a professional journalist in the meeting room eager to ask challenging questions. But through the end of the
night, pleasantries were exchanged and our troupe of interns was able to meet some of our Indian benefactors who paid for our lodging in Santacruz. The Aditya Birla Group, the largest donor of the South Asia Columbia Global Center as well as one of the wealthiest conglomerates in India, was in attendance and spoke with some of the interns.

The weekend was even more fun than my week worth of reviewing license agreements. With six other Columbia interns, I went to a small resort state called Goa for two nights and two days. We had planned our trip about two weeks in advance and managed to find really cheap flights (the plane ride was 20 minutes) and even cheaper accommodations ($20 for the weekend). This trip also marked the first time I took a bus out onto the tarmac to board a plane, which had both exits opened so passengers could enter from the front and back of the plane. After some scary turbulence trying to leave the monsoon constantly hanging over Mumbai, our group arrived in Goa for the first time. Together with a group of Indian young adults (around the ages of 25-30) we met at a club in Bandra, they took us to see the nightlife of that resort state. In the mornings and afternoons, we went sightseeing and visited several Portuguese churches left untouched after Portugal colonized west India prior to the British incursion. We even got to see a spice farm that was in a densely tropical area of Goa, essentially what amounted to a rainforest in South Asia. After learning about the massive spice trade that spurred the Europeans to the Silk Road, we toured through the farm and had a chance to pick up cinnamon and thyme. The night, of course, was spent dancing the night away to the sound of classics like La Bamba, the Macarena, I Will Survive, and others (the friends we took with us to Goa were a generation older than us). Nevertheless, I have never sung as loud as I had that night in Goa.
**Week 6 (July 15-21):**

Pretty exhausted from the Goa trip that I just completed over the weekend, I was unprepared for the amount of work that followed. This biggest project I was assigned to for the remainder of the week was a due diligence of an Indian cement company which had its headquarters in Mumbai. For those unfamiliar with the terminology of due diligence, it means that a law firm will comb through the finances, news reports, outstanding legal obligations, investments, and all relevant information about a company in order to assess its legal liabilities. Normally, entire firms are assigned to a single due diligence where different sectors are assigned to different members of the firm. My responsibility was to assess this cement company’s international offices in the United Arab Emirates and China. The associates in charge of the case mistakenly thought I could read entire legal documents in Chinese for a while, and after pretending to skim through the first fifty pages, I admitted I knew no Chinese for the occasion. I was then handed a poorly translated English version of several contracts that the Chinese subsidiary had been involved in and was instructed to summarize them for the rest of the week. While I was very interested to see how India was investing in different parts of the world and learning about this company’s international financing strategies, the reading of the contracts was incredibly dry and tiring. There were a few late departures to the apartment that week, but thankfully, I was able to leave before the more workaholic interns went home. While impressive, I certainly did not want to follow their model of hard work (it seems terribly boring).

There were, however, flecks of sunshine in this week, both literally and figuratively. By now, the monsoon season was in full swing and bright mornings were rare. Luckily, in the middle of the week, the sun came out for a few moments and a brief walk outside the firm and beside the magnificent Marine Drive right next to the office woke me up for the time being. On Wednesday evening, the other interns and I were able to meet the Director of the Columbia Global Center in Mumbai for pizza and conversation. Nirupam Bajpai, senior executive of the Earth Institute at Columbia and close friend of renowned economist Jeffrey Sachs, took time out of his exceptionally busy schedule to ask us about our internships. We were blown away by his welcoming personality, his practicality, and his various meetings with people of influence as a result of thirty years of economic development research. After the pizza chat, our group of effusive interns asked to see his wall of fame, which included pictures with two Indian Prime Ministers, the former president of India, and a humorous picture with PrezBo.
On Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, I left work early to embark on one of the best sightseeing tours of India during my time there. With one other intern, I took off from Mumbai to New Delhi to explore the capital of India. The Honeywell interns I met from the State Department Education Summit two weeks ago volunteered to guide us through the innumerable things to do in Delhi. The first day included a hectic day of seeing the city and its monuments, like the Red Fort and the Indian Gate. We later met up with the Honeywell interns to have an extravagant dinner in an upscale part of Delhi called Hasz Gaz Village. That following morning (at 4 in the morning!), my friend and I departed Delhi to take a 3 hour car ride to Agra, the area where the Taj Mahal is situated. The early rise was well worth the lost sleep; the Taj Mahal was less crowded than usual and we were able to freely see the most breathtaking marble palace of India.

Right after the Taj Mahal, we trekked the Agra Fort, which is directly across the river from the Taj Mahal. Our entertaining tour guide took us through every nook and cranny of that fort, and a lot of Indian history was relayed during our two hour stay there. Finally, Sunday marked our final day in Delhi, where we met with the Honeywell interns a second time.
for some insider city traveling. First going to a place called the Loti Gardens (Lotus Garden), we marveled at the variety of plants and fauna nestled between the canoodling couples seen all over the park. After that, we went to a massive Hindu temple called Akshardam with the most intricate stone carvings I have ever seen. Flanked by huge stone elephants, the temple towered above picturesque fountains and walkways that formed the inner courtyard. And before we knew it, it was time to go back to work the following morning!
Week 7 (July 22-28):

At work this week, some of the heavy lifting of paperwork came as a wave of first year associates began their employment at AZB and Partners. Eager to make an impression on the senior partners of the firm, the associates would stay long hours during the night and usually drag in some interns as collateral damage. Since the legal interns were also desirous of good recommendation letters and possible employment after graduation, the lights were on for quite a long time this week at AZB and Partners. For me personally, there was no such incentive to gain employment in India in the future, so I was spared much of the workaholic hours that some of the other legal interns engaged in. However, I was given my share of paperwork just like everyone else, resulting in a straight week of compiling an annexure for lease agreements that one of our clients had signed. The company we represented, a fashion line with numerous outlets in various locations all across India, sought legal advice for the many outstanding legal obligations it was involved in, including settlements, leases, and other contracts. It was my duty to read through the lease agreements for stores in Chennai, Mumbai, Calcutta, and Bangalore while another intern handled Hyderabad, Kerala, and Gujarat. And as I would watch the sun go down from the 23rd floor of this office building every evening, I kept reminding myself that home was just two weeks away and that the work would soon be over. Luckily, the new associates realized that the inhuman amount of hours they were logging at the office were resulting in less than adequate results, so the fast pace of the paper factory thankfully slowed down a bit. A lot of coffee and five workdays later, the weekend was finally here.

In terms of sightseeing for this weekend, it was a relatively quiet two days. Many of the other interns were more than willing to stay indoors and prepare for their final projects, presentations, and research. A lot of us were thinking about our first American meals once we got back to the States as well, all the while eating as best we could in the Indian restaurants in Mumbai. By then, the majority of the interns had gotten traveler’s diarrhea at least once and a few of us contracted more serious illnesses (including me), but gratefully no one was seriously incapacitated. A casual day of shopping in Colaba market and heated haggling with some vendors did all of us some good, especially as the monsoon was bidding the interns a fond farewell by pouring the heaviest rains that weekend. Moreover, I was busy planning my final getaway in India with two other interns for a short post-internship excursion through the Indian
state of Rajasthan. A few airline reservations and hotel confirmations later, the final workweek was upon us before we knew it.

**Week 8 and Departure Week (July 29- August 8):**

THE FINAL WEEK. Always a bittersweet moment for anyone traveling to a different country, this week was a heartwarming reminder of the law firm’s gentler side. The workload for this week was very light, given the fact that a lot of the associates knew I was leaving for America by the end of the week. Since most projects I was assigned to took time in excess of one week, most of the attorneys gave me feedback and suggestions for my career rather than assign me work. A warm exchange between myself and Vijay Datwani, the office manager, also happened this week. Vijay was the intern orientation organizer and was also in charge of the IT department at the firm. He was the one who arranged my trip to the Bombay Hospital when I fell ill at the office, then personally arranged a ride in one of the partner’s cars to get me there. I also had a nice heart to heart with Nandita, the executive assistant for Bahram Vakil who sat next to me at the office. The best feedback, however, came from Nandish Vyas, the supervising partner that had been working with me for most of the summer, assigning me cool projects that involved international investing and accounting. Throughout my internship, he actively sought projects for me that would be applicable for other jobs in other sectors. Through his tutelage, I learned so much about accounting, corporate relations, investment options, and Indian law that I would not otherwise have learned from the associates. He certainly made my time at the law firm a rewarding and fulfilling experience, as well as all of the legal interns there who helped me with the mountains of work that was assigned to me. Contacts were exchanged, final goodbyes were said, and soon, I was out of AZB and Partners for good. On Thursday night, I also said a fond farewell to the Indian friends that went to Goa with me a while ago, and a small gathering back at the apartment concluded the official part of my journey in India.

**VACATION DAY ONE**

Saturday, August 3-
Together with my two friends from Columbia, I took a short plane ride from Mumbai to Udaipur for the first part of my Rajasthan tour. Our hotel reservations were located at the Panorama Guest House, an
extremely affordable, quaint guesthouse where a lot of Europeans visit during the tourist season. The hotel also had a beautiful view of Lake Pichola as it was situated on a peninsula jutting into the water. The view from the roof of the hotel was even more phenomenal, where all three of us would have our breakfast. After leaving our backpacks in the room, we took an initial survey of the city by walking up the steps to a Hindu temple and gazing at the sights.

From there, we decided to take a boat tour from the City Palace to an island in the middle of the lake called Jag Mandir. Jag Mandir was the summer palace of the king of Udaipur and interestingly, the top of the palace was the model for the Taj Mahal. Shah Jahan, the king during the construction of the Taj Mahal, was sheltered in the Summer Palace in his childhood years.
At night, we spent a romantic three person date at a lake view restaurant called Ambrai. The food was amazing and for the first time in India, it didn’t make me sick! Of the many places I’ve seen in India, it was the best date spot in all of Rajasthan.

VACATION DAY TWO

Sunday, August 4- After breakfast at the Panorama Guest House, the team and I took our formal tour of the City Palace of Udaipur. As the former king’s official palace of residence (when he was not inhabiting the summer palace or monsoon palace), the City Palace housed some of Rajasthan’s most beautiful treasures. With a guide, we walked through the many courtyards, rooms, and hallways of the palace while taking our obligatory tourist pictures for the folks back at home.

After touring the City Palace
in the morning, we spent lunch at a German café a few blocks from the waterfront for much needed coffee and chocolate cupcakes. After our quick pit stop, we were off to our next destination at Bagor Ki Haveli, a little-known museum that was donated to the city by a wealthy benefactor. Inside, we looked at Udaipur’s antiquities as well as a collection of puppets handcrafted by the local residents. The artist himself gave us a personal puppet show before we departed.

Luminescent windows of City Palace in the evening (below)

After leaving the museum, we continued our busy day in Udaipur by traveling to the other side of the city. There, we toured the area around Fateh Sagar Lake and visited a historical site called Moti Magri in the hills around the area. From Moti Magri, which was on relatively high elevation, we gazed at our next destination… Moti Magri’s COOL STATUE->>
THE MONSOON PALACE was definitely one of the most beautiful monuments I visited in India. Situated high above the city of Udaipur, this palace was the winter getaway of the King of Udaipur during the monsoon season. With a towering view of the rolling hills of Rajasthan as well as colorful primates among the trees, the monsoon palace was one of my favorite places in India.

VACATION DAY THREE

Monday, August 5- With help from the staff at Panorama Guest House, my fellow interns and I spent our final day in Udaipur driving through rural India to reach Kumbelgarh Fort. Built in the 1600s, the Fort was placed high in the mountains to prevent the Mughal Empire from attacking it. It seemed like a great idea at the time, because it was exhausting just finding the
right transportation to reach the monument. We were there for just an hour, as our driver wanted us to see another monument before the day was done. An hour’s drive later, we arrived at Ranakpur, an important Hindu temple in Rajasthan. The temple was very serene and very quiet; it was so quiet, in fact, that I fell asleep on one of the stone benches in the temple when my friends weren’t looking.
As we returned to Udaipur, we picked up some dinner at a restaurant called Maxim café. Wanting to enjoy our last night in Udaipur, we decided to dine in and enjoy the sunset at this rooftop restaurant. That marked the end of the first leg of our journey in Rajasthan.

VACATION DAY FOUR

Tuesday, August 6- After waking up at FOUR IN THE MORNING to make the early morning bus to Jodhpur, our group spent a terrifying four hours on a bus that quickly sped through mountain passes and bolted past a variety of different animals. Among the animals we passed/almost run over were boars, goats, camels, cows, and monkeys, some of which tried to climb aboard our bus. Luckily, our driver was smart enough to throw some food out the window and the monkeys soon ran to the far side of the road. Our bus getaway ended sometime in the afternoon in Jodhpur when we arrived at our hostel. Called the Hem Guesthouse, this hostel was in a very local part of the city and a bit farther away from the main roads. Nonetheless, we spent the rest of the day climbing the hill of Jodhpur to reach the Mehrangarh Fort, well worth the 45 minute hike. The tour guide was friendly, very knowledgeable about the fort, and adventurous enough to take us through most of the rooms.
After the fort, our troupe had dinner at a fantastic restaurant called Indique and watched the sunset from its rooftop restaurant. On the first floor, we were able to watch a dance rehearsal set up by the restaurant for its future customers. Finally, after the performance, my lone day in Jodhpur was concluded with gazing at the colorful clock tower in the center of the town square.
FINAL DAY IN INDIA-

Wednesday, August 7- By seven in the morning, I was ready to go home. My two friends, continuing their tour of India without me, would be staying in Jodhpur, traveling to Jaipur, then finishing at the Taj Mahal for another five days. I, on the other hand, would be going back to Mumbai to catch a red eye to London Heathrow and then to JFK. I said my goodbyes, returned to Mumbai by early afternoon, and had one final nostalgic day in the city where I had spent two months of my summer. I spent half of my time watching a really great movie called Bhaag Milkha Bhaag, a story about Milkha Singh, India’s most prominent track runner. It was a very emotional movie and I may have cried once or twice during the movie.

After that, I had one last look at the office of AZB and Partners, took pictures of the building like a good tourist, and walked down Marine Drive for my final hours in India.

Twenty four hours and two suitcases later, I was back home.