

I am a PhD research student, based at The University of Manchester, in the Department of Materials. I recently spent six months at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore, for a collaboration with Prof. Bikramjit Basu, of the Materials Research Centre, and his research team, under the Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC). This was an incredible experience and I feel extremely lucky to have been afforded such a rewarding opportunity.



I arrived at IISc in January 2022, during which time the pandemic was still in full swing and there were lots of restrictions in place. As such, I was placed in quarantine for two weeks upon arrival. Despite being in isolation, I was made to feel incredibly welcome, and those two weeks flew by without a hitch. I was then able to venture into the lab and meet the team. There was a strong community spirit amongst the researchers, and I immediately settled in and felt at home. The campus is genuinely beautiful, teeming with interesting wildlife, and the tree-lined streets make for a very pleasant stroll to the office each morning. The trees not only look nice, but also provide ample shade from the intense sun during the warmer months – a true blessing for those of us that are used to much milder climates.

There is also a strong community around sport at IISc, with the Gymkhana offering a wide variety of activities and events. I am a big cricket fan and, despite having not played in roughly 8 years, I was welcomed with open arms into the departmental cricket team to take part in an upcoming tournament, which was another great avenue to meet new friends. I also played some badminton and snooker, but this just scratches the surface of the offerings, with everything from dance classes and yoga to football and kho-kho.

Bangalore is rich in culture, and you don't need to venture far from the campus gates to discover stunning temples and delicious food. The rest of India is also very accessible from Bangalore, and we regularly arranged trips and activities for the weekends. A particular stand-out for me was spending time camping in Kerala, surrounded by tea plantations which made for some stunning views.

Alongside enjoying all that Bangalore had to offer, my time in the lab with Prof. Basu and his research team was very productive. It is a great environment to work in with a cohesive team of people that are always keen to help each other out and learn about new avenues of research. Overall, my stay at IISc far surpassed any expectations I could have had, and I hope to be fortunate enough to visit again someday.