

POSTCARD FROM...BORDEAUX

Cross-cultural connections

Gaurav's MBA journey was filled with an array of educational and cultural experiences



NAME: Gaurav Chopra
EDUCATION: IAE, University de Bordeaux, France
COURSE: MBA, (Advance Management Programme)



An extremely fast-paced, fun-filled and unforgettable year at Great Lakes had almost come to an end, when 25 of us were packing our bags to head to Bordeaux,

France, to pursue our second MBA degree, as part of the Advance Management Programme (AMP) by Great Lakes at IAE, University de Bordeaux.

It was hard for me to curtail my excitement on visiting Europe, as I stood in the queue for my immigration process. I still fondly recall how beautiful the top view of the Alps was from the window of my airplane seat, and the lush green pastures around Paris as the plane made its descent into the Charles de Gaulle Airport.

After spending the next few days in Paris absorbing its beauty and also acclimatising to the French weather we headed to Bordeaux for our programme. The university welcomed us with a city tour wherein we learnt a lot about the rich history and culture of the wine capital of the world. The city's centre is surrounded by beautiful architectural buildings built in the 17th century, but the most spectacular view any tourist will get is at its water mirror, the largest of its kind in the world.

Back at the university, our course coordinator, Christine, a warm-hearted Mexican lady, introduced us to our classmates, which not only comprised students from France and India but also from Brazil, Nigeria, and Turkey.

Hands-on

The programme primarily focused on finance and operations. However, our professors too, who were from France, England, Peru, and Italy, had rich industry experience, and ensured that we gained a better understanding of European business culture, strategy and practices rather than curtailing us to pure academic discussions. During the course, much of our learning came from brainstorming with our batchmates on business cases and live stimulation models wherein we got hands-on exposure of working in diverse, cross-cultural teams, thereby developing a deep-

er understanding and tolerance towards one another's culture. Such experiential learning to which we all got exposed to, was indeed something unique for us, and helped us enrich ourselves as budding international business managers, as we took our toddler steps into the corporate arena.

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Getting to stay in Bordeaux was an amazing experience in itself. It has been rated as one of the world's best cities to live and work in, and rightly so. The city is filled with public parks and gardens and has a convenient and affordable public transportation system. The people there are extremely polite and soft spoken. On a personal level, the city taught me the importance of getting up early, staying fit, cooking one's own food, and maintaining a healthy, work-life balance. The city had so much to offer, its nightlife and the energy levels of people during soccer nights at the local sports pubs was astounding. One could go for a walk around St. Catherine square, and witness live street shows and dance performances of local artists, or take a cruise accompanied with dinner along the Garonne River.

Our trip couldn't have been complete without a visit to the vineyards. So, the university organised a special wine tour for all of us wherein we interacted with the local managers as well as business owners there, and got to learn a lot about the wine industry, its production, ageing and pricing process and how this industry drove the economy of Bordeaux for over the past half millennium.

The beauty of the relativity of time is that it passes off really quickly when you are having a good time. The four week programme ended and we packed our bags to head back home to join our corporate jobs across India.

Gaurav Chopra is an alumnus of Great Lakes Institute of Management, Chennai. He is currently working as a Senior Business Analyst, Accenture.

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