A Review of the 2010 AONSA Neutron School by William Brant

As with any school of this type there is not just one aspect to it. In addition to the actual content which is taught there are many more things which affect the overall experience. From the food and hospitality to the ability to meet new people and establish contacts all over the world, even the opportunity to take a break from the work and experience the local culture. This report will briefly cover some of the aspects of the AONSA 2010 neutron school that were both perfect in their execution to other aspects that may need some improvement.

Positives

Perhaps the best part of the school, as expected, was the material which was covered. I came to the school thinking I knew exactly what technique I wanted to learn more about. I left the school with two new techniques I had never learnt about which are perhaps even more relevant than what I originally set out to learn. The content was covered at a level which directly catered towards learning whether the technique was relevant for our research.

Definitely another very positive aspect of the neutron school was experiencing the local cuisine. Breakfast, lunch and dinner were not only all catered for but the options for food provided a wide selection of unique and delicious Indian style dishes. Curries I had never seen or heard of before however all high quality. The accommodation was also decent with climate control for each room and ensuite.

A very welcome addition to the school was the trip into Mumbai city for sightseeing. It was not only a welcome break from lectures but also a great opportunity to see other areas of India I may not get the chance to again.

Things to change

The organisation, at least for Australian participants, was a very stressful experience which was definitely not necessary, especially in regards to acquiring an Indian visa. I obtained my visa on the Friday before leaving on the following Sunday. I had began the application process six weeks prior to leaving and five of those were spent waiting for various letters of approval which in the end I did not need, contrary to what the visa website claims. The process to work out the forms were not needed should not have taken as long as it did.

There was the odd lecture which slipped into heavy theory, which is of course still important, however rendering them slightly less relevant to those of us who knew nothing of what the technique actually does. As this was not a predominant issue it is not really something that needs changing, just kept in mind for the next school.

Despite a few issues getting into India (visas), overall the school was a very enjoyable and definitely a worthwhile experience academically and culturally.

William Brant

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