



“It's not so much what you learn about Mumbai, it's what you learn about yourself, really. You find out a lot about yourself and your tolerance, and about your inclusiveness.” - Danny Boyle

Gateway of India

Built to commemorate the first-ever visit of a British monarch to India, King George V and his consort Queen in December 1911, its foundations were laid in December 1913 but construction only began in May 1920, post the completion of the reclamation of the area. It was formally opened in December 1924. Incidentally, the passing of the 'First Battalion of the Somerset Light Infantry' was recorded as the first main event that took place at the Gateway of India. Conducted on February 28, 1948, when the last set of British troops and divisions left India, post-independence!

It's architectural style is Indo-Saracenic (a mix of Hindu-Muslim architectural elements) and was designed by George Wittet (who also designed the CSMVS, the King Edward Memorial Hospital and the Institute of Science in the city). The monument is built using Yellow Basalt and indissoluble concrete. It took 4 years for the completion of the construction.

Things to look out for – “Jaalis”/ Lattice work, side gates a replica of middle gate, typical Rajasthani octagonal turrets and Shivaji's and Swami Vivekanand's statues. Shivaji, on a black horse facing the Gateway, was a Maratha Warrior King, renowned for innovative military tactics and guerrilla warfare methods. Swami Vivekanand, to the side of the Gateway, was a 19th century Hindu monk, credited with introducing the Indian philosophies of Yoga and Vedanta to the western world.

Around the Gateway of India

The Taj Mahal Hotel

Having first opened its doors to guests on 16th December 1903, whatever be the “real” reason for its construction, it is unmistakably a landmark in Mumbai! And to add to its charm, during World War I, the hotel was converted into a 600-bed hospital. It has many firsts, engineering and luxury- to its credit - the 1st hotel to have electricity and to have steam elevators in India and imported American fans, German elevators & Turkish baths! The dome of the hotel is made from steel as used in the Eiffel Tower.

Elephanta Caves

One of the ‘must sees’ when you are in Mumbai, nothing can prepare you for the site that welcomes you at the Elephanta Caves. The caves are a single minded devotion and celebration of Lord Shiva, one of the most popular Hindu gods. This walk around the Elephanta Caves will give you a peak into the mystical Hinduism and one of its most powerful sects: Shaivism (followers of Lord Shiva) as well as cave architecture and a small dive into the British presence here. This is where you get to see Lord Siva in his myriad forms: as an ascetic; a cosmic dancer; a husband; a family man. It is mythology coming alive!

Things to look out for – The captivating cave panels (partly destroyed), the “Lingam”. However, these caves are inaccessible during the monsoons.

Other Sites / Landmarks

Kanheri Caves

Located in the northern part of Mumbai, Kanheri Caves epitomise Buddhism to the hilt. Architectural representations, the 11 headed bodhi satva (a rare depiction of a mythological figure in Buddhism), mudras (Buddha in all his expressions) and stupas, cave planning and architecture, water management systems, art styles and much more ... every aspects of the Caves here trigger your imagination of the life that would have been once upon a time in this "monastery". Walk across multiple caves to uncover the reasons for the rapid growth of Buddhism, it's various sects, it's almost fraternal bond with the trading community and the stories that each of these caves seem to be narrating. From being arguably the world's largest religious order at one point to its impacted fortunes, Kanheri Caves' tales will keep you captivated even after you return home!

Things to look out for – the chronology of cave excavations revealed by the features! The water management systems, the cemetery a short hike away and an ancient script!

Sea Link

A new lifeline to cross over from the original "Bombay" to Bandra was created in the form of the "Rajiv Gandhi Sea Link" (till then, the only route was the Mahim Causeway built in the mid-1800s). The sea link has many engineering "firsts" to its credit – the 1st cable-stayed bridge in the open seas in India, the 1st infrastructure project to use seismic arresters, 25 million man-hours etc.

Various estimates put the daily traffic on the sea link to be approx 50,000 vehicles (capacity of 140,000 cars).

Haji Ali

"Sufism" has typically attracted followers from all communities and countries – looking for realization of their "mannats"! From one of Bollywood's first families to Richard Gere to Pakistan's President, Sufi dargahs have long attracted followers. With over 20 dargahs in Mumbai, Sufism remains one of Mumbai's lesser explored secrets! Built in 1431, and spread over an area of around 5,000 sq. m. and stands adorned with an 85 foot high minaret, the Haji Ali dargah is located 500 metres into the sea and often attracts over 40,000 visitors on Thursdays and Fridays.

Marine Drive

Cannes has its Croisette, Beirut has its Corniche, Havana has its Malecon and Mumbai has Marine Drive: often referred to as the 'Queen's Necklace', especially in the night. Housing a row of Art Deco residential buildings, the entire area (like rest of South Bombay) is built on reclaimed land! A little ahead on the stretch is Nariman Point, a premier central business district of the city! This 4.3 kms long stretch is not just popular with visitors who come for a share of the sea, but also a popular 'events' destination - India's Republic Day Parade as well as the City Marathon! One of the last reclamations conducted in the City resulted in the land on what now stand some of the Nariman Point buildings.

Maidans & Cricket

The "Maidans" were created in British Bombay to enhance security. They subsequently have become open spaces in a rapidly developing Mumbai – often referred to as the "Lungs" of Mumbai. Originally forming the Esplanade, each of the maidans – Cross, Azad, Oval & Cooperage – have their own stories to narrate. Also, used now for playing cricket, these maidans have witnessed world records being created here!

Dabba-Wallahs

Present in Mumbai as early as 1890, *Forbes* on the dabba-wallahs – "Mumbai's "tiffinwallahs" have achieved a level of service to which Western businesses can only aspire. "Efficient organization" is not the first thought that comes to mind in India, but when the profit motive is given free rein, anything is possible. To appreciate Indian efficiency at its best, watch the tiffinwallahs at work." The dabba-wallahs have also been the theme of a Bollywood film recently!

Things to look out for – the system of hand-over from one dabba-wallah to the other for an effective "hub & spoke" model, the coding on the tiffin-boxes!

Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus

Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus has always been a lot more than a railway station. It has always been the commercial nerve-centre of the city. At a first glance, it instantly looks 'Victorian'. But pause for a few minutes outside this beauty and you see the inclusive efforts at creating an indo-western fusion in its architectural style. Located on the site where the original Mumba Devi (the goddess from whom the city derives its name) temple was!

Things to look out for – the gargoyles, the Lion & the Tiger, representation of the different communities in the architecture, the clock tower and its numerals, and the missing statue!

Mani Bhavan

India's independence movement and one of its most illustrious leaders, MK Gandhi, comes alive at Mani Bhavan (built in 1912), which was not only the residence and office of MK (Mahatma) Gandhi between 1917 and 1934 but also the venue for landmark protest movements. Born in 1869, when Bombay was witnessing an economic boom, Gandhi spent his initial years pursuing his own "personal" aspirations till the time he returned permanently to India in 1915, aged 46, when he found his true calling! Once back in India, Gandhi persevered to "free" India not just of the shortcomings of British rule but also what he saw as "ills" of society.

Things to look out for - the medals he was awarded by the British, Charkhas (spinning wheels), letter of appeal to Hitler, the book "Autobiography – My Experiments with Truth".

Local Trains

Undeniably the lifeline of Mumbai City, the "Local" trains in Mumbai have travelled a long way from the single train on a single route in 1853! Spread over 465 kms, with over 2,000 trains and 7 million passengers and the City being geographically concentrated, many initiatives have been undertaken to improve the train services – from downtime reduction to increasing capacity (remember 1/3rd of all passengers travel in the 4 peak-hours – 8am-10am and 6pm-8pm)!

Things to look out for – the timeliness of each train and how passengers time their residence & office departures to their "own" train! And of course, the dabba-wallahs who depend upon the trains for their livelihoods!

Afghan Church

Built in 11 years (longer than Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus!) to be completed by 1858 to commemorate the victims of First Afghan War, this beautiful, gothic monument, located at one end of the City, is a testimony to the fact that Afghanistan has always been the epicentre of the geo-politics of the region. Notwithstanding that, the church has many 1sts: imported stained glass work, import of construction designs from England amongst many more!



**F1102/03, ASHOK GARDENS, TJ ROAD,
SEWREE, MUMBAI 400 015.**

TRAVEL-LOGS.IN