



# Mumbai

A visit to the vibrant city of Mumbai is like being on a rollercoaster ride, says **Heidi Fuller-Love**

THE BIRTHPLACE OF Bollywood on India's west coast, Mumbai is a colourful riot of extremes that makes for a lively and exciting two-day break. But be warned: whether you choose to take a slow paced auto-rickshaw or zip through town on the Suburban Railway, you're in for a rollercoaster ride.

Developed as a major trading centre by the British East India Company in the 18th century, Mumbai — still known to many by its pre-1990s name of Bombay — is a melting pot of cultures, religions and cuisines, where world-renowned temples such as **Mumba Devi** and **Mahalakshmi** mingle with vast slums, and daring new architecture (like the three-mile cable bridge linking chic **Worli** with celebrity-studded **Bandra**) rubs shoulders with Victorian gothic revival masterpieces such as **Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus**.

Home to a vast complex of studios known as Film City near **Sanjay Gandhi National Park**, celluloid is a vital part of the city's heritage too. Bollywood Tours run half-day expeditions that include lunch in a film studio and a drive-by of famous actors' houses, or you can look for the talent scouts who hang out at the city's celebrated **Leopold Cafe** on

Colaba Causeway and become an extra for the afternoon.

The first port of call for many tourists, **Colaba** is a bustling South Mumbai neighbourhood with shady streets, colonial era cafes, chic boutiques and **Chor Bazaar**, one of the largest flea markets in India. With sights including the Gateway of India and Jehangir Art Gallery close by, this is the city's cultural heart.

To sample the best of Mumbai's street food, order a Goan curry in the dockside stalls of Fort Mumbai or head for **Chowpatty**, the city's best known beach, for *bhelpuri*, a snack made of rice, vegetables and a tangy tamarind sauce that you scoop up with deep fried bread *puri*. End the day watching the sunset fall on the romantic **Marine Drive**.

● **Sample:** **Greaves Travel** offers three nights at Trident Bandra Kurla Hotel, including flights with British Airways, transfers, guides and sightseeing, from £1,099 per person. T: 0207 487 9111. [www.greavesindia.co.uk](http://www.greavesindia.co.uk)

● **Contact:** Government of India Tourist Office. T: 00 91 22 2207 4333. [www.tourismindia.com](http://www.tourismindia.com)

## DAY 1

● **MORNING:** Explore the vast and venerable Chhatrapati Shivaji Museum, housed in an iconic building that epitomises the extravagant, hybrid Indo-Saracenic style, whose three floors house priceless Indian miniatures, ancient weapons and striking sculptures.

● **AFTERNOON:** Bargain for antiques and souvenirs in Chor Bazaar, then take the ferry from the Gateway of India, Mumbai's equivalent of Paris's Arc de Triomphe, to the Elephanta Caves, and observe the stunning rock sculptures dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva.

● **EVENING:** Work up an appetite with a leisurely stroll around the Fort district to discover 18th century alleyways and architecture that survived the eponymous fort, which was demolished in 1865. Then head for Trishna, a tiny restaurant where Bollywood stars and visiting dignitaries come to sup on succulent garlic crab and a range of fresh fish dishes.



## DAY 2

● **MORNING:** Learn more about Mumbai's divine heritage at Siddhivinayak. One of the city's richest and most celebrated temples, it was built in 1801 as a shrine to elephant-headed god Ganesh. Many of Bollywood's top stars come to worship here.

● **AFTERNOON:** Grab lunch in Lower Parel, once home to cotton mills, now one of Mumbai's hippest districts, then head for the Phoenix mall, a shopping haven housing international brand name boutiques and local Indian designer stores.

● **EVENING:** Enjoy an evening stroll along the Worli Seaface, a millionaire's real estate promenade beside the Arabian Sea offering fabulous views of the city, then wend your way over to Blue Frog, a trendy, atmospheric restaurant serving fusion food accompanied by live music, where the city's beautiful people hang out.

