

Mumbai, the city that never sleeps! Pulsating, Alive, On the Move, Vibrant, Fun -- this is Mumbai or as it is still frequently referred to -- Bombay. The most modern city in India, it captures the spirit of the changing pace set by liberalization and modernisation.

Once a cluster of seven islands, Mumbai was presented to King Charles II in 1661 as part of the dowry when he married Princess Catherine de Braganza of Portugal.

HISTORY - A Glorious Heritage

The Hindu Rule

Originally, the seven islands were a part of the kingdom of Ashoka. After Ashoka's demise, countless rulers of the Silahara dynasty took over until the Kingdom of Gujarat annexed the islands in 1343 AD and remained such till 1543 AD.

Portuguese Colonization

In 1543 AD, the Portuguese seized the isles from Bahadur Shah of Gujarat and they remained in their control until 1661. Following this period, the isles were ceded as dowry to Catherine de Braganza when she married Charles II of England. He, in turn, leased the isles to the East India Company during their colonization in 1668 and that's when the city was named Bombay. In a matter of seven years, the population of the city rose from a mere 10,000 to 60,000 in 1675. After the population in the city began to grow, the East India Company officially transferred their headquarters from Surat to the new city called Bombay.

The Hornby Vellard And Industrialization

The Hornby Vellard was one of the first engineering projects to be undertaken in Mumbai. William Hornby, the governor of Bombay, initiated the project in the early 18th century despite harsh opposition from the East India Company. Thereon, the city began to take shape with several civil engineering projects underway, marking the birth of the Industrial Revolution. The seven islands were finally merged into one single mass in 1845, and in 1853, the country's first railway connection was accomplished between Bombay and Thane. The city was under the rule of the Company's hands until the revolt in 1857.

The opening up of the Suez Canal in 1869 also meant that connections between Bombay and the rest of the world were open, resulting in Bombay becoming one of the major ports in India. Just before gaining Independence, the city witnessed large scale Hindu-Muslim riots that resulted in colossal massacres and turmoil.

Post-Independence

Post-independence, the city expanded drastically and a number of suburban towns were incorporated within the city limits such as Borivali, Andheri, Malad, Thane and Bandra. In 1960, Bombay became the new capital of Maharashtra. Sky-scrapers, towering architecture, the Bombay Stock Exchange, tarred roads and a boom in the secondary and tertiary sector changed the city's status and brought it up to one of the top four cities in the country. Today, Mumbai is the fourth most populous city in the world.

Mumbai is the business capital of India and is also one of the largest cities in the country. The present population of Mumbai is estimated to be millions and is still growing. Not many know however, how the population grew or how the city got its status as the commercial capital of India. The insight into the history of this glorious city is the answer to its inspiring beginnings and eminence around the world.

PLACES OF INTEREST

Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (Victoria Terminus)

The Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, formerly known as Victoria Terminus in Mumbai, is an outstanding example of Victorian Gothic Revival architecture in India, blended with themes deriving from Indian traditional architecture.

The Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus is the westernmost end point of the [Central Railways](#) of India. It is also the southern end point of the central and harbour lines of Mumbai's metropolitan rail transport system. A large section of the building is given over to administrative functions of the Central Railways, including commercial operations such as railway reservations.

A magnificent building, completed in 1888, the Victoria Terminus was named after the then [Queen Empress \(Queen Victoria\)](#) on Jubilee Day, 1887. Construction started in 1878 based on a design by [F. W. Stevens](#), and took 10 years to complete. The cost of construction was Rs. 16.14 lakhs (Rs. 1.614 million). The railway station was opened to the public on New Year's Day, 1882. It is now the starting point of the Central Railways.

Built in the Victorian Gothic Revival style, based on Italian Gothic models, the complicated ground plan of the building is counterpointed by marvellous filigrees, carvings and arches. The south-western part of the building is topped by a dome holding up a statue of Progress. It is an early example of a uniquely Bombay style of architecture which emerged when British

architects worked with Indian craftsmen to include Indian architectural tradition and idioms.

When the building was first used it held not only railway functionaries such as the accounts, chief engineer and traffic manager but also other municipal offices such as the superintendent of the police. Curiously, railway tickets were also printed in the same building. The number of people working here rose for almost a hundred years. In the 1980's the Railways began to lighten the load on the structure. It presently holds over 700 employees of the Central Railway.

The Victoria Terminus was renamed Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus on March 4, 1996. In September 1999 pedestrian access to the suburban railway terminus was moved underground. The subway was built at the incredible cost of Rs. 15 crores (Rs. 150 million).

This building has long been on the urban heritage list and a protected monument. It was put on the [UNESCO World Heritage List](#) on July 2, 2004. It is the first functional administrative building to be put on this list.

Unfortunately, some of the lovely carvings are at such an awkward height that you can only get a close view from the top deck of a passing double-decker bus. Citizens and tourists may get a better view of the details when the Central Railways starts guided tours of the structure.

Global Vipassana Pagoda

Global Vipassana Pagoda is the World's Largest Pillar-less dome with a capacity to seat 8,000 meditators. In it are also enshrined Buddha's genuine relics, thus becoming the first such pagoda in India after King Ashoka's era.

In a beautiful and natural setting, surrounded by sea on three sides and atop a hillock, this architectural marvel announces the renewed possibility of learning Vipassana meditation once again, in the same pure and effective form as Buddha taught it 2,600 years ago. The Pagoda radiates peace and harmony and encourages one and all to learn Vipassana to transform oneself into a peaceful, powerful and pure person, based on the experience of millions around the world. It is decorated with Burmese facade to show gratitude to the Burmese Master Ven Sayagyi U Ba Khin who inspired Vipassana revival in the world.

Only a world that has peaceful individuals can be a peaceful place, is the Vipassana Pagoda's message to the world

Flora Fountain and the Gothic/Victorian buildings of the Fort Area

The Flora Fountain stands on the site of the old church gate of the Bombay Fort, now a major crossroad named Hutatma Chowk. It was erected to honour Sir Bartle Frere, a former governor of Bombay and named after the Greek goddess Flora. Other buildings to see in the Fountain or Fort area are the University of Mumbai buildings including the imposing Rajabhai Tower, the Mumbai High Court, the Old Secretariat, and the Institute of Science on one end. Close by are situated St Thomas Cathedral, the Asiatic Society of Bombay or Town Hall, the Office of the Director General of Police, the General Post Office and the Thomas Cook building.

The Western Railway Headquarters is also quite near, across the street from the Churchgate Station. These buildings are fine examples of the Gothic and Indo-Saracenic style. Many are illuminated by night. An exotic way of seeing these sights would be by the MTDC open-air bus or by the few surviving Victorias or buggy rides. Close by to Flora Fountain is the Kala Ghoda area which holds a once a week fair (every Sunday) from November to January.

Jehangir Art Gallery

Close by to the Prince of Wales Museum, this gallery is the showcase for contemporary art. The displays change regularly. Outside is the Artist's Plaza with more paintings on display and sale. Open daily from 11 am to 7 pm.

Prince of Wales Museum

This is one of Mumbai's finest example of Victorian architecture. Built to commemorate King George V's visit to Mumbai (while still Prince of Wales), it was designed by George Wittet and completed in 1923. It is undoubtedly one of India's finest museums and houses treasures, artefacts, paintings and sculpture from the many periods covering India's history, including the Indus Valley Civilization. Open from Tuesday to Sunday, 10.30 am to 6 pm.

National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA)

This is the former Cowasji Jehangir Hall, of the Institute of Science. It has been renovated to serve as a four-storey exhibition hall, displaying the best of Indian contemporary art. Open daily except Monday, from 10 am to 5 pm.

Gateway of India

Mumbai's most striking monument, this too was designed by George Wittet. It has an imposing gateway arch in the Indo-Saracenic style with Gujarati and Islamic elements such as wooden carvings. It was built to commemorate the visit of King George V and Queen Mary to India in 1911. This area is also the departing point for ferries plying to Elephanta Island and other beaches across the port. Behind it is the beautiful old (and new) structure of the Taj Mahal Hotel .

Marine Drive and Chowpatty Beach

Chowpatty Beach is a teeming mass of people, vendors, masseurs and roadside restaurants with its specialties being bhelpuri and kulfi. Across the Chowpatty Beach area is the Taraporewala Aquarium. Marine Drive is also referred to as the Queen's Necklace because of the dramatic line of street lamps lit up at night.

This is the stretch now known as Netaji Subhashchandra Bose Road with Nariman Point on one end to Babulnath, at the foot of Walkeshwar on the other. For the most part, a pleasant promenade continues along the beach

Malabar Hill

This is essentially an up-market residential area with some spectacular views of the city surroundings. On the road climbing up, is a Jain temple dedicated to Adinath, the first Jain tirthankara. At one end, on the top are the Hanging Gardens (Pheroza Shah Mehta Gardens) and the Kamala Nehru Park. Both provide relaxing atmospheres of greenery. Beside the Hanging Gardens are the Parsi Towers of Silence. But these are off-limits to all except those who have come to dispose and pay respect to the dead.

Towards the other end is the Banganga temple complex at Walkeshwar, considered to be one of Mumbai's holiest sites. Local legend has it that the Hindu god Rama rested here on his way to rescue Sita (his wife) from Lanka. The Banganga Tank is supposedly the spot where Rama shot his bow or bana. Further away is the British built Raj Bhavan, the residence of the governor of Maharashtra. The Banganga Festival of Music is a yearly highlight, and is in the month of January usually.

Mani Bhavan

This simple and charming museum was where Mahatma Gandhi lived on his visits to Mumbai between 1917 and 1934. Gandhi's room and belongings including his books are on display. Mani Bhavan is situated on Laburnam Road, near the August Kranti Maidan, where the 'Quit India' movement was launched in 1942. Open daily from 9.30 am to 6 pm

Haji Ali Shrine

Further along the seashore, at the end of a long pathway surrounded by seawater is the shrine dedicated to Haji Ali, a Muslim saint. Access is only at low tide via the pathway.

Juhu Beach

This suburban beach is great favourite with Mumbaites, and has plenty to offer everyone. Like Marine Drive's Chowpatty, Juhu 'Chowpatty' is a vendor's delight with innumerable food counters. It is a wonderful place to bring kids, as it doubles up as an amusement park, play ground, and open-air restaurant. An unusual sight at this beach is the camel ride, which is both fun and popular.

SHOPPING

Mumbai is not only famous for the international fashion brands and labels, but is also home to a wide assortment of local markets, boutiques and shopping malls that sell almost everything that a local Mumbaikar needs! The markets are located at suburbs and if you are good at bargaining, you can get items for half the price. In Mumbai, you can find the latest outfits, unique furniture, delicate brass work, exquisite paintings, home furnishings and so much more! There are many malls in Mumbai that not only comprises of shops but food courts and entertainment zones as well. A shopper's paradise, Mumbai is truly a great shopping destination for all.

'Colaba Causeway' is a huge, local market situated in Colaba where you can get just about everything! Originally known as 'Shor Bazaar', which means 'noisy market', the 'Chor Bazaar' is situated in Mutton Street and is one of the oldest markets in Mumbai. If you are looking for modern or traditional objects, handicrafts, jewellery, brass items, outfits and more, then 'Linking Road' is the best option for you. 'Fashion Street' is always crammed with college students and teenagers who come here to shop for the trendiest attires. If shopping on the streets is not enough to quench your thirst, then you have the option of

visiting Mumbai's colossal malls. You can satisfy all your shopping desires and explore the best retail textile outlets at the colossal shopping malls located in the city. From latest books to electronics and clothing or even eco-friendly products, shopping malls in Mumbai is the one-stop solution for all your shopping requirements. Articles in this section are designed to educate you more about shopping in Mumbai.

Chor Bazaar

Mumbai's Chor Bazaar is the pride of the city in terms of shopping. Located in South Mumbai, Chor Bazaar literally translates to 'thieves market'. One of the oldest markets in Mumbai, the place has a fascinating history that dates back to over 150 years. Initially, Chor Bazaar was known as 'Shor Bazaar', which means 'noisy market'.

Crawford Market

Crawford Market is a popular spot for buying all the household items. Whether you are planning on buying vegetables or poultry, then Crawford Market is the place to be. Crawford Market was the main wholesale market till 1966.

Fashion Street

Fashion Street is one of the most widespread shopping destinations in Mumbai. With over a varied array of 150 shops, Fashion Street promises the ardent shopper a lot more junk and knick-knacks than any large mall or fashionable stores can offer.

Mumbai Shopping Places

The 'City of Dreams' is home to several shopping areas, malls and markets, where you can buy almost anything, from shoes to posters and kitchenware to furniture! Mumbai is famous for its up-to-the-minute goods, be it ethnic clothes or the latest, designer shoes.

Zaveri Bazaar

Zaveri Bazaar is one of the most popular jewelry markets in the island city of India. One of the biggest hubs for B2B and B2C merchandizing, Zaveri Bazaar, as the name suggests, is a jewelry souk, just north of Crawford Market. Here, tourists will find thousands of small jewelry shops selling precious