

Two food-and-culture-forward days in Mumbai, built around Elephanta and the seafront

Mumbai, Maharashtra — The City of Dreams

A compact two-day Mumbai plan that front-loads the one thing you can't do casually - the boat trip to Elephanta Caves - then spends the second day moving through the city's museum, railway heritage, a seaside shrine and its most-visited temple, with proper sit-down meals worked in between. It's a moderate-pace plan built for a family that's happy to walk, queue a little, and take taxis rather than rely on the crowded suburban trains.

Suits: Families and groups of friends on a short mid-range trip who want Mumbai's signature sights (Gateway, Elephanta, Marine Drive, a museum, temples) without a punishing schedule, and who'd rather pay for app-cabs than stand on a packed local train.

What it costs, per person

Stay: Rs 5,000 · Food: Rs 1,550 · Local transport: Rs 850 · Tickets: Rs 240 · **Total: Rs 7,640**

Day 1 · Gateway, Elephanta and the Marine Drive evening

Harbour and sea: the boat-trip day

07:00 Gateway of India

Start early, before the heat and the crowds build up - this basalt arch overlooking the harbour is Mumbai's most photographed spot and also the departure point for the Elephanta ferry, so you're in the right place for the day's main outing anyway. Entry is free; just allow time to look around and take photos before boarding.

Gateway of India, Colaba · 30 min · Rs 0 · Walk from Hotel Suba Palace, about 10 minutes, free

With family: Touts near the Gateway sometimes offer unofficial boat tickets or tours - buy ferry tickets only at the official counter.

07:45 Ferry to Elephanta Caves and cave visit

Take the first available ferry (about an hour each way) to Elephanta Island, a UNESCO World Heritage site of 6th-8th century rock-cut cave temples centred on a large sculpted figure of Shiva. From the jetty there's a short uphill walk or a toy train option to the caves; go early to beat the midday heat and crowds, and remember the caves are closed on Mondays.

Elephanta Island (via Gateway of India ferry) · 360 min · Rs 40 · Official ferry from Gateway of India, about 60 minutes each way, approx 200 INR round trip

With family: Uneven stone steps and some climbing - hard going for anyone with knee trouble; keep bags zipped and food out of sight, as monkeys near the caves will grab both. Not ideal for very small children in a pram, but manageable for toddlers who can be carried.

15:30 Marine Drive sunset walk

Back on the mainland, head to this flat, 3-km seafront promenade known as the Queen's Necklace for how its lights curve at night. It costs nothing, there's nowhere to trip, and it's genuinely restful after a long boat-and-climb day - good for elderly parents to just sit on the sea wall and watch Mumbai come out for its evening walk.

Marine Drive, Nariman Point · 60 min · Rs 0 · Ferry back to Gateway of India included in the round-trip fare, then a taxi/app cab, about 15 minutes, approx 150 INR

With family: Flat and pram-friendly, one of the easiest walks in the city for older family members.

17:00 Colaba Causeway & Fashion Street browse

A short, low-key wander through this dense stretch of street stalls and small shops for clothes, jewellery and souvenirs, alongside fixed-price boutiques and cafes for anyone who'd rather not haggle. Good for picking up small gifts before dinner; bargaining is expected at the stalls.

Colaba Causeway, Colaba · 90 min · Rs 0 · Walk along the seafront back towards Colaba, about 15 minutes, free

With family: Crowded and a known pickpocket spot - keep bags zipped and in front, and hold children's hands.

Where to eat

Breakfast: Bun, masala and dahi chutney before heading out. Local train cafe near Colaba (Rs 150)

Lunch: Simple thali or snacks at the food stalls near the Elephanta jetty — Elephanta Island food stalls (Rs

250)

Dinner: Bhel puri, pav bhaji or a sit-down Malvani seafood meal near Marine Drive — Restaurant near Marine Drive/Colaba (Rs 300)

Where to stay

Hotel Suba Palace, Colaba — Rs 2,500 a night. A simple, well-located budget hotel with private AC rooms, an easy walk from the Gateway of India and the Elephanta ferry, keeping the stay cost comfortably within budget so there's more room for food and taxis.

Save a little: Buy Elephanta ferry and cave tickets only at the official counters near the Gateway - avoid touts who quote inflated 'package' prices for the same boat.

Day total, per person: Rs 3,590

Day 2 · Museum, railway heritage and two shrines

Culture, heritage buildings and faith

10:15 Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS)

Mumbai's flagship museum, in a grand Indo-Saracenic building, with sculpture, miniature paintings, arms and natural history collections - large enough to fill a couple of unhurried hours, and there's an on-site cafeteria if anyone needs a break with children in tow.

CSMVS Museum, Kala Ghoda · 120 min · Rs 200 · Walk from Hotel Suba Palace, about 15 minutes, free

With family: Cool, indoor and air-conditioned - a good midday option if anyone in the group is heat-sensitive. Children aged 5-15 pay a reduced 40 INR.

12:30 Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CST) - exterior view

A short stop to see this UNESCO-listed Victorian Gothic railway building from outside, even without catching a train. Midday is a reasonable time to linger, since it's least crowded and comfortable outside the morning and evening commuter rush.

CST, Fort · 30 min · Rs 0 · Walk, about 10 minutes, free

With family: Avoid lingering here during morning/evening rush hours with children - the station concourse gets extremely crowded.

15:00 Haji Ali Dargah

A white marble shrine on an islet connected to the mainland by a causeway, walkable only at low tide. Check tide timings before setting out - it's a genuinely striking site, but the causeway floods over at high tide and there's no rushing an elderly parent back if the water's coming in.

Haji Ali, Worli · 60 min · Rs 0 · App cab, about 25 minutes, approx 200 INR

With family: Only accessible at low tide - confirm timings that morning; the causeway walk is uneven and best avoided in a rush with older parents or small children in a pram.

17:00 Siddhivinayak Temple

One of Mumbai's most-visited Ganesha temples, with a lively evening atmosphere. Entry is free and it stays open into the night; expect a queue and some crowding, especially if your visit falls on a Tuesday.

Siddhivinayak Temple, Prabhadevi · 60 min · Rs 0 · App cab, about 20 minutes, approx 150 INR

With family: Crowds can be intense, particularly on Tuesdays - keep small children close and expect some queuing for darshan.

Where to eat

Breakfast: Irani cafe breakfast - keema pav or akuri on toast — Irani cafe near Colaba (Rs 150)

Lunch: Sit-down thali or Parsi cafe lunch near Kala Ghoda — Restaurant near CSMVS Museum, Kala Ghoda (Rs 350)

Dinner: Sit-down Gujarati/Marwari thali or Koli seafood dinner — Restaurant near Colaba/hotel (Rs 350)

Where to stay

Hotel Suba Palace, Colaba — Rs 2,500 a night. Same central Colaba base for the second night, keeping return journeys from the day's spread-out stops (Worli, Prabhadevi) manageable by cab rather than adding a hotel change.

Save a little: Skip the audio guide at CSMVS (saves 50 INR each) and instead read the gallery labels, which are detailed enough for a family visit.

Day total, per person: Rs 4,050

Pack for this trip

- Comfortable, closed walking shoes for uneven steps at Elephanta and cobbled stretches around CST and Colaba.
- A hat, sunscreen and water bottle - most of Day 1 involves open-air waiting for ferries and walking in the sun.
- A light scarf or stole for temple visits (Siddhivinayak, Haji Ali) if modest covering is preferred.
- A zip-up bag or crossbody bag for crowded spots like Colaba Causeway and the Elephanta jetty.
- Small denomination cash for street food stalls and temple donation boxes, which don't always take cards.

Stay safe

- Keep bags zipped and in front in crowds at Colaba Causeway, CST and the Elephanta ferry queue - these are known pickpocket spots.
- Hold children's hands near traffic; pavements are inconsistent and crossings can be chaotic even at signals.
- Check tide timings before heading to Haji Ali Dargah - the causeway is impassable at high tide.
- At Elephanta, don't leave food or open bags unattended near the caves - monkeys will grab both.
- Avoid unmetered taxis parked outside stations or hotels; insist on the meter or use an app cab for a fixed fare.

Local courtesies

- Remove shoes before entering Siddhivinayak Temple and Haji Ali Dargah; cover shoulders and knees where possible.
- Bargaining is expected at Colaba Causeway's street stalls but not at fixed-price boutiques.
- Photography may be restricted inside some temple sanctums and inside parts of the CSMVS Museum - check signage.
- Tipping isn't mandatory but is appreciated for guides or boat crew on the Elephanta ferry.

If it rains

- Elephanta ferries can be suspended in rough seas during heavy rain - have CSMVS Museum and Colaba Causeway (partly covered) as a backup for that day.
- CST's exterior can still be viewed under station awnings if it's drizzling.
- Siddhivinayak Temple and Haji Ali Dargah's shrine areas are covered, though the Haji Ali causeway itself gets slippery and is best skipped in heavy rain.
- Carry a compact umbrella or raincoat rather than relying on street vendors' plastic ponchos, which run out fast in a downpour.