

Three Days in Mumbai: Heritage, Caves and the Seafront

Mumbai, Maharashtra — The City of Dreams

A moderately paced South Mumbai-based trip that mixes colonial-era heritage and museums with a boat trip to the Elephanta Caves, a couple of well-loved temples, and easy evenings on Marine Drive and Juhu Beach. Expect some walking, some traffic between stops, and plenty of street food and thali meals along the way.

Suits: Mid-range families and groups who want Mumbai's signature sights without over-packing each day, and who are comfortable with some walking, queuing and short cab rides between stops

What it costs, per person

Stay: Rs 7,500 · Food: Rs 2,450 · Local transport: Rs 1,180 · Tickets: Rs 240 · **Total: Rs 11,370**

Day 1 · Colonial Mumbai and the Seafront

Heritage buildings, a flagship museum, market shopping and a Marine Drive sunset

08:00 Gateway of India

Start early at Mumbai's most photographed landmark, overlooking the harbour, while it's still relatively cool and uncrowded. It's also the departure point for tomorrow's Elephanta ferry, so it's worth getting your bearings here today.

Apollo Bunder, Colaba · 30 min · Rs 0

With family: Ignore touts offering unofficial boat tours or 'guide' services near the arch; buy any tickets only from official counters.

08:40 Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CST) - exterior view

A short stop to see the UNESCO-listed Victorian Gothic station facade from outside. It's still commuter rush hour, so this is a quick photo-and-walk-on stop rather than a place to linger.

Fort area, near Dadabhai Naoroji Road · 20 min · Rs 0 · Walk, 10 minutes, free

With family: Hold children's hands crossing the road here - traffic and crowds are heaviest in the morning rush.

10:15 CSMVS Museum (Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya)

Mumbai's flagship museum in a grand Indo-Saracenic building, with sculpture, miniature paintings, arms and natural history sections. Two unhurried hours is a comfortable amount of time, and there's an on-site cafeteria if anyone needs a break.

Kala Ghoda, Fort · 120 min · Rs 200 · Walk, 15 minutes, free (there is a roughly 45-minute gap before opening at 10:15 - use it for breakfast at a nearby Irani cafe)

With family: Children aged 5-15 pay a reduced ticket of around INR 40; under-5s are usually free. Large enough to be tiring for very young children by the end, so pace it slowly.

14:00 Colaba Causeway & Fashion Street shopping

A dense stretch of street stalls and small shops selling clothes, jewellery, souvenirs and export-surplus fashion, alongside fixed-price boutiques and cafes. Bargaining is expected at the stalls.

Colaba Causeway · 90 min · Rs 0 · Walk, 15 minutes, free

With family: Keep bags zipped and in front - this is a known pickpocketing hotspot in the crowds; not very stroller-friendly.

18:00 Marine Drive at sunset

A flat, easy, 3-km sea-facing promenade known as the Queen's Necklace for how its streetlights look after dark. Sit on the sea wall like most Mumbaikars do and watch the sunset over the bay.

Marine Drive, Nariman Point · 60 min · Rs 0 · App cab, 20 minutes, approx 150 INR

With family: Flat and easy for elderly parents or a pram; pleasant and safe in the early evening, though it's sensible to head back before the quieter late-night hours.

Where to eat

Breakfast: Bun maska and Irani chai at an old-school Irani cafe near Fort — Fort area (Rs 150)

Lunch: Mid-range Gujarati or Maharashtrian thali, Kala Ghoda / Fort (Rs 350)

Dinner: Sit down Malvani or Kon seafood restaurant (or a pure-veg thali if travelling with Jain guests) — Colaba

(Rs 450)

Where to stay

Hotel Suba Palace, Colaba — Rs 2,500 a night. A private, air-conditioned room a short walk from Gateway of India, the museum and Colaba's markets, keeping all of Day 1 within easy walking or short cab distance.

Save a little: Walk between Gateway of India, CST and CSMVS instead of cabbing short distances - they're all within 10-15 minutes of each other on foot.

Day total, per person: Rs 3,900

Day 2 · Elephanta Island

A full-day boat trip to the rock-cut cave temples, followed by an easy evening of street food

08:30 Elephanta Caves (full excursion)

A UNESCO World Heritage cluster of 6th-8th century rock-cut cave temples on an island an hour's ferry ride from the Gateway of India, centred on a large sculpted figure of Shiva. The visit includes the ferry over, a short uphill walk or paid toy train to the caves, time to explore, and the ferry back - budget the better part of the day for it.

Elephanta Island, Mumbai Harbour · 300 min · Rs 40 · Walk 10 minutes from the hotel to the Gateway of India jetty (free), then ferry to Elephanta Island, approx 60 minutes, around 180-200 INR return per person - buy tickets at the official counter, not from touts

With family: Closed on Mondays - if your Day 2 falls on a Monday, swap this plan with Day 3. Involves a steep, uneven stone stairway (a toy train covers part of it for a small extra fee, useful for elderly parents or anyone with knee trouble); monkeys near the caves will grab open food or bags, so keep everything zipped. Go on the first ferry to beat the heat and the midday crowds.

16:30 Evening street food at Girgaon Chowpatty

A relaxed wind-down after the island trip, with bhel puri, pav bhaji, and sugarcane juice stalls along the sand as the evening cools off.

Girgaon Chowpatty, Marine Drive · 90 min · Rs 0 · App cab from Gateway of India, approx 20 minutes, 150-200 INR

With family: Stick to busy, high-turnover stalls, and go easy on raw chutneys and cut fruit if travelling with small children with sensitive stomachs.

Where to eat

Breakfast: Quick vada pav or hotel breakfast before boarding the ferry — Near Gateway of India (Rs 100)

Lunch: Simple thali or snacks at the stalls on Elephanta Island — Elephanta Island (Rs 250)

Dinner: Bhel puri, pav bhaji and kulfi at the Chowpatty stalls — Girgaon Chowpatty (Rs 300)

Where to stay

Hotel Suba Palace, Colaba — Rs 2,500 a night. Staying put in Colaba keeps the Gateway of India jetty, where both the outbound and return ferries dock, within a 10-minute walk.

Save a little: Skip the paid toy train on Elephanta if everyone in your group is comfortable walking - the uphill stretch is short, just uneven underfoot.

Day total, per person: Rs 3,620

Day 3 · Temples, the Sea Link and Juhu Beach

A quieter culture-and-coastline day across the western suburbs

07:00 Siddhivinayak Temple

One of Mumbai's most visited Ganesha temples. Going early on a weekday gets you a far more peaceful darshan than later in the day.

Prabhadevi · 60 min · Rs 0 · App cab from the Colaba hotel, approx 30 minutes, 180-220 INR

With family: Avoid Tuesdays if possible, when queues can run for hours; dress modestly and be ready to remove shoes before entering.

09:00 Haji Ali Dargah

A white marble shrine and mosque on an islet, reached by a causeway that's only walkable at low tide. Check tide timings before setting out.

Worli seafront · 60 min · Rs 0 · App cab, approx 10 minutes, 70-100 INR

With family: The causeway floods over at high tide and can be rushed to cross back over if timed poorly - confirm the tide schedule that morning and skip this stop if it's inaccessible, keeping to the earlier timing slot instead.

12:00 Bandra-Worli Sea Link scenic drive

An 8-lane cable-stayed bridge across the bay, enjoyed as part of the cab ride onward rather than as a stop, since there's no pedestrian access. Good skyline views from the car.

Between Worli and Bandra · 20 min · Rs 0 · Continue in the same app cab from Haji Ali, approx 15 minutes, 100-120 INR

With family: Nothing to disembark for here - just ask the driver to take the sea link route rather than the older road.

17:00 Juhu Beach

A wide, busy beach popular in the evenings for street food, pony rides and people-watching rather than swimming.

Juhu · 90 min · Rs 0 · Continue in the same cab towards Juhu, approx 15-20 minutes, 90-100 INR

With family: The sand and water aren't particularly clean, so this is better for a stroll and snacks than for letting small children swim; keep an eye on belongings in the crowds.

Where to eat

Breakfast: Hotel breakfast or an Irani cafe stop before heading out — Colaba (Rs 150)

Lunch: Mid-range restaurant or cafe — Bandra (Rs 400)

Dinner: Pav bhaji, sev puri and kulfi at the Juhu Beach stalls — Juhu Beach (Rs 300)

Where to stay

Hotel Suba Palace, Colaba — Rs 2,500 a night. Kept as the base for all three nights to avoid the hassle of changing hotels mid-trip, even though today's sightseeing runs further north.

Save a little: Ask the driver to keep the meter running (or book a single app cab for the whole Siddhivinayak-Haji Ali-Sea Link-Juhu loop) rather than booking four separate rides, which usually works out cheaper than hopping in and out.

Day total, per person: Rs 3,850

Pack for this trip

- Comfortable, closed walking shoes - there's a fair bit of walking and some uneven stone steps at Elephanta Caves
- Sunscreen, hats and a refillable water bottle, since much of the day is spent outdoors
- A light scarf or stole for modest dress at Siddhivinayak Temple and Haji Ali Dargah
- A light rain jacket or umbrella if travelling in the monsoon months (June-September)
- Hand sanitiser and basic stomach medicine, useful with street food on the itinerary

Stay safe

- Hold children's hands near roads and at crossings - Mumbai traffic is heavy and pavements are inconsistent
- Keep bags zipped and in front in crowded spots like Colaba Causeway, Crawford Market and local trains
- Elephanta Caves involve uneven stone steps and some climbing; monkeys there will grab food or bags left open
- Haji Ali Dargah's causeway is only walkable at low tide - check timings before setting out, especially with elderly parents
- Avoid touts near Gateway of India offering unofficial tours or boat tickets; use the official ferry counter
- Stick to metered taxis or app cabs (Uber/Ola); avoid unmetered taxis parked outside stations and hotels

Local courtesies

- Remove shoes before entering temples like Siddhivinayak and dress modestly at both Siddhivinayak and Haji Ali Dargah
- Bargaining is expected and welcomed at street stalls on Colaba Causeway and Fashion Street, but not in fixed-price shops
- Ask before photographing worshippers or vendors up close
- A tip of around 10% is appreciated at sit-down restaurants where service isn't already included
- Jain and vegetarian travellers can ask directly for Jain-specific menus at most mid-range and upscale restaurants

If it rains

- Elephanta ferries can be suspended in rough monsoon seas - check with the ferry operator before heading to the jetty and have CSMVS Museum as a comfortable indoor backup for that day
- Swap outdoor stretches like Marine Drive or Juhu Beach for a longer museum visit or an afternoon at a mall in Bandra or Lower Parel
- Carry a compact umbrella or raincoat rather than relying on shelter, since Mumbai's monsoon downpours can be sudden and heavy
- **Waterlogging can slow down road traffic significantly, so build in extra time between stops and lean on the suburban train for longer hops if you're comfortable with crowds**

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