

# The GUIDE

*Nighttime streets in front of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus, an Indo-Saracenic landmark in the heart of South Mumbai.*

## Mumbai to the Max

Clamorous and captivating, India's biggest city bursts with an energy that can be felt across its ever-evolving spectrum of restaurants and bars, one-off boutiques, and creative pursuits. Here, a guide on what to eat, drink, and do now.

BY CHRIS SCHALKX

## NIGHT RIDER

Given the chaos of Mumbai's bustling daytime streets, it's hard to imagine that the largest city in India ever gets quiet. It does—but you'll have to forgo a night's sleep to witness it. That's where the **Midnight Bicycle Ride** run each Saturday by Reality Tours ([realitytoursandtravel.com](http://realitytoursandtravel.com)) comes in. Best known for its slum tours of Dharavi, where its sister NGO Reality Gives funds and operates educational programs, the community-driven company starts cyclists off in Colaba at 12 a.m., taking them through almost deserted streets past ethereally lit heritage buildings, eerily quiet beaches, sacred wells, and the world's most expensive home, the 27-floor Antilia House, valued at upwards of US\$1 billion. The seven-hour tour ends at Worli Fort, where you'll arrive just in time for a spectacular sunrise with 360-degree city views, made even sweeter with a breakfast of *idli* and *chai*.



### Where to Drink Now

#### SLINK + BARDOT

This small-plate French restaurant, which opened last May in an old turquoise bungalow at the entrance to Worli village, is worth the schlep for the food alone. But the attached lounge (pictured above) is turning heads as well:

it was crowned Best Bar for Cocktails by the 2017 edition of the India Nightlife Convention and Awards. Mood lighting, velvet couches, and a playlist of relaxed jazz set the tone for an evening of stiff drinks such as *Sitting In An English Garden* Waiting For The Sun, a blend of gin, elderflower, cucumber juice, egg white, and lavender bitters ([fb.com/slinkandbardot](http://fb.com/slinkandbardot)).

#### THE LITTLE EASY

Billed as a speakeasy-style pub, The Little Easy in Bandra eschews gimmickry (there's no secret location, no password) in favor of keeping the focus on expertly crafted cocktails by mixologist Mukesh Khatri: try the gin-based *Moonshiner* with orange juice and hibiscus syrup,

or the classic *Sazerac*. And come hungry, as there are some delectable bar bites—paneer tikka tacos; *vada pav*—on the menu ([fb.com/thelittleeasyindia](http://fb.com/thelittleeasyindia)).

#### THE QUARTER

Set inside Mumbai's beautifully restored Royal Opera House, The Quarter provides an evening-filling experience spread over four different venues. There's a café and a restaurant serving Louisiana Creole food, but vino lovers will want to head straight for Drink, Mumbai's first mozzarella bar, where burrata and bocconcini are paired with wines from a well-stocked cellar. There's also Live, a 1950s-inspired jazz bar with nightly live performances and a menu of classic cocktails ([thequarter.in](http://thequarter.in)).

### {local take}



#### Abhishek Honawar

Hotelier and restaurateur, Honawar Hospitality

My favorite local haunts are in and around South Mumbai. The **Sea Lounge** ([tajhotels.com](http://tajhotels.com)) at the Taj Mahal Palace is a great breakfast spot and the perfect prelude to a morning's stroll around the atmospheric streets of Colaba. A nearby cultural highlight is the **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya** ([csmvs.in](http://csmvs.in))—formerly the Prince of Wales Museum—for its collection of ancient Indian sculpture and miniature paintings. Come evening, nothing beats a sunset cocktail at **Dome** ([ihg.com](http://ihg.com)), the rooftop bar at the InterContinental on Marine Drive. I also love **The Bombay Canteen** ([thebombaycanteen.com](http://thebombaycanteen.com)) in Lower Parel, where classic regional Indian dishes are served with a modern twist. Don't worry if you overindulge; you can dance it off at **XXO** ([stregismumbai.com](http://stregismumbai.com)), the two-story nightclub at The St. Regis Mumbai.

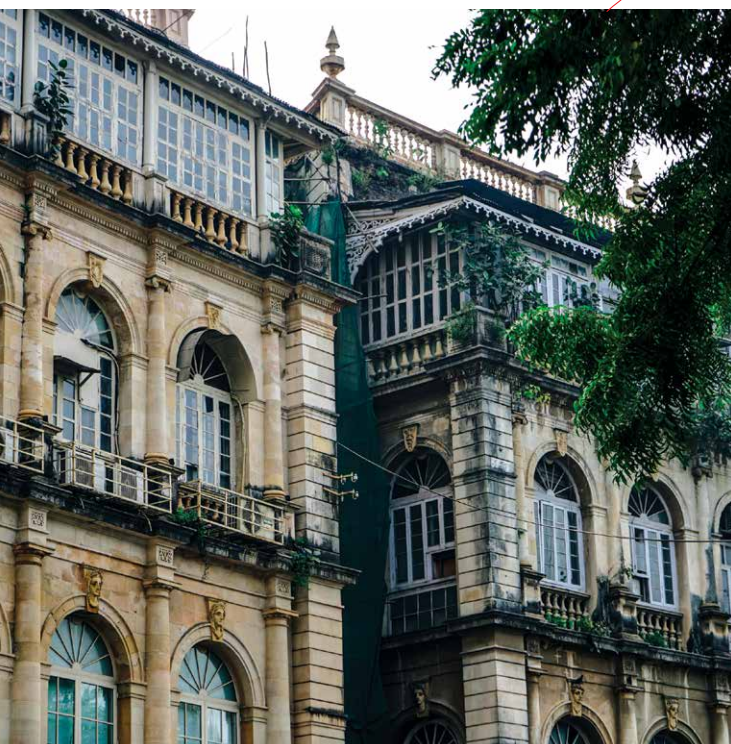


## Small Wonder

For all the city's grand hotels, few places capture the essence of Mumbai quite like **Abode** ([abodeboutiquehotels.com](http://abodeboutiquehotels.com); doubles from US\$118). Set inside a lovely old building in the heart of Colaba, the 20-room bolt-hole encapsulates

everything that makes this part of town so delightful: it's youthful, creative, and proud of its rich heritage. All of these traits are reflected in the interiors, where hand-painted tile floors complement an impressive collection of custom teak furnishings and quirky, quintessentially Indian

bric-à-brac like chai trays and vintage tiffin boxes. While the "basic" rooms are best avoided due to the lack of private bathrooms, the more spacious and photogenic top-level rooms come with walk-in rain showers, claw-foot bathtubs, and large windows that overlook the clamorous streets below.



Classic Kala Ghoda architecture.  
Below: Outside Obataimu.

from all over India. Seven different exhibition halls means there's plenty to explore.

**9 a.m.** Start the morning with a house-blend coffee and a fruit-topped "desi" waffle at **Kala Ghoda Café** ([kgcafe.in](http://kgcafe.in)), one of the first spots to put Kala Ghoda on the map for young, in-the-know Mumbaiers. The whitewashed brick walls are hung with work by international photographers.

**10:30 a.m.** Discover that "bespoke leisurewear" is a thing at the atelier of Tokyo-meets-Mumbai clothing brand **Obataimu** ([obataimu.com](http://obataimu.com)), where a selection of incredibly soft, mostly unisex garments can be tailored from scratch by a team of in-house artisans. A few doors away, hit up the equally cool **Bombay Shirt Company** ([bombayshirts.com](http://bombayshirts.com)) for something more office-appropriate.

**12:30 p.m.** For a leisurely lunch, hop over to **The Pantry** ([fb.com/thepantrymumbai](http://fb.com/thepantrymumbai)), located just across the street from Obataimu. With its high ceilings, industrial lighting, and subway-tiled walls, the café attracts a fashionable crowd; the *croque monsieur* with wholegrain mustard is not to be missed.

**2:30 p.m.** Release your inner art critic at **Jehangir Art Gallery** ([jehangirartgallery.com](http://jehangirartgallery.com)), a Mumbai institution showcasing the work of well-known contemporary artists

**4:30 p.m.** With a rustic interior that has barely changed since its founding in 1953, **Yazdani Bakery** (11 Cawasji Patel St.) is one of Mumbai's most iconic Iranian cafés. Do as the locals do and order a heavily buttered *bun maska* with a hot cup of chai to dunk it in.

**6 p.m.** Head back to the area around the bright blue Keneseth Eliyahoo Synagogue for a bit of shop-hopping before dinner. **Filter** ([filtershop.in](http://filtershop.in)) stocks indie magazines and stylish accessories; **Nicobar** ([nicobar.com](http://nicobar.com)) sells contemporary Indian fashion; and **Kulture Shop** ([kultureshop.in](http://kultureshop.in)) offers limited-edition prints by local artists.

**7:30 p.m.** It may be a bit cramped and dowdy, but none of that matters at **Trishna** ([trishna.co.in](http://trishna.co.in)), because the South Indian seafood here is widely regarded as the best in town. Call ahead to book a table and be sure to order the Hyderabad pomfret and butter pepper garlic crab.

**10 p.m.** Before heading back to your hotel, check out **Woodside Inn** ([woodsideinn.in](http://woodsideinn.in)) for a locally brewed craft beer or two. Set inside the historic Indian Mercantile Mansion, the neighborhood's favorite watering hole will have you chatting with local creative types in no time.



## A DAY IN KALA GHODA

After much of the city's buzz moved to its quickly gentrifying northern suburbs in the early 2000s, South Mumbai quietly started to slide into oblivion as an entertainment district. But thanks to a burgeoning arts scene and new creative initiatives, Kala Ghoda, the old cultural enclave just north of Colaba, has cemented itself as one of the coolest quarters in town. Flanked by Mumbai's principal museum and art galleries (not to mention some of the best-preserved buildings from the Raj era), the area is well worth a day's exploration, with its sleek concept stores, contemporary galleries, and hip hangouts all easily navigable by foot.



*O Pedro's Goan favorites include chorizo-and-bacon pulao, chili pakeoras, and red snapper "poke." Inset: The bar at Toast & Tonic.*

## WHERE TO EAT NOW

### Masque

Tucked away in the unassuming Laxmi Woolen Mills compound in Lower Parel, Masque takes its guests on an eight- or 12-course culinary journey from the Ladakhi highlands to the backwaters of South India. With a focus on farm-to-fork fine dining using seasonal ingredients sourced from farmers and artisanal producers around the country, diners are bound to encounter unfamiliar ingredients and unexpected combinations. The journey starts—literally—in the kitchen, where all guests are invited for their first course and a personal introduction by chef

Prateek Sadhu. Dishes on Masque's regularly changing tasting menu are refreshingly devoid of spheres, foams, and other gimmicks; instead, they let the qualities of each ingredient speak for themselves ([masquerestaurant.com](http://masquerestaurant.com)).

### O Pedro

Launched by the team behind the foodie-favorite Bombay Canteen, O Pedro brings a welcome whiff of Goan hospitality to the otherwise sterile office environment of the Western Suburbs' Bandra Kurla Complex. With a menu heavy on old family recipes and Portuguese heritage dishes, the restaurant

proves that Goan cuisine can be so much more than vindaloo and palm toddy. Must-tries here are the chorizo-and-bacon pulao, the seafood *cataplana*, and some of the fun rum-based cocktails. Whatever you pick, be sure to add a basket of sourdough *poe* (pita-like Goan bread) to your order. Accompanied by flavored butters, they're utterly delectable ([opedromumbai.com](http://opedromumbai.com)).

### Toast & Tonic

After conquering the casual dining scene in Bangalore, Toast & Tonic recently opened a second outpost in Mumbai, in the same building as O Pedro. Taking inspiration from the

cultural melting pot of Manhattan's East Village, the menu comprises a globetrotting lineup of dishes, all with a focus on local and seasonal ingredients. Whether you order the gumbo or the gnocchi, the duck tacos or the *kibbeh*, you'll be assured of bold flavors, pretty plating, and a great attention to detail. As for cocktails, the restaurant's name already gives it away: Toast and Tonic does a mean G&T. Try the signature Herbalist, a mix of gin, basil, and house-infused orange tonic water served with a large cube of coriander-orange ice ([toastandtonic.com](http://toastandtonic.com)).

### JLWA

Bandra's newest fine-dining darling, JLWA (pronounced *jal-wah*) occupies a shimmering space below the ever-popular Escobar. The food, billed as "Euro-Indie," is nouvelle regional fare inspired by chef Roshan Seth's childhood memories and travels around India. A Sindhi *kadhi* comes in the guise of a seafood soup; roast Keralan duck is accompanied by purple-yam risotto and asafetida-scented camembert; and bean-curd shashlik is spiked with hemp seeds and presented alongside olive pâté and a maple-carrot coulis. JLWA doesn't shy away from a bit of theater at the table, so expect over-the-top cocktail presentations, edible sands, and smoke-filled domes ([jlwa.in](http://jlwa.in)).



## Shop Talk

Four stores that should be on every style-hunters checklist.

### CLOVE

Housed in a pretty Art Deco building in Colaba, hotelier and entrepreneur Samyukta Nair's month-old Clove brings a smartly edited selection of Indian lifestyle brands together in a homey concept store. With an inventory that spans homeware, tableware, fashion, and beauty products, you won't leave empty handed. ([clovesthestore.com](http://clovesthestore.com)).

### BUNGALOW 8

Finding this casual-chic concept store is a small adventure in itself, as the shop is located literally under the stands of the Wankhede Cricket Stadium. Here, owner Maithili Ahluwalia—and one of India's most prolific style icons—takes shoppers on a journey through a collection of antique jewelry, artisanal Indian garments, and ultra-chic home accessories ([bungalowweight.com](http://bungalowweight.com)).

### THE GEM PALACE

Jaipur's legendary Gem Palace—a go-to for royals and celebrities alike—finally opened an outpost in Mumbai two years ago, bringing along a hefty dose of Rajasthani refinement. The store's interiors (pictured left) are as eye-catching as the jewelry on display ([munnuhthegempalace.com](http://munnuhthegempalace.com)).

### LE MILL

With its owners "eyes on

Paris" but their "hearts in Mumbai," this high-end concept store features upcoming Indian designers alongside international it-brands like Céline and Balenciaga. Founded by two French expats wanting to put Mumbai on the international fashion map, the lofty space houses over 40 handpicked luxury brands, a tea salon, and a flower boutique ([lemillindia.com](http://lemillindia.com)).