

In our frenzied daily rush, our rapt involvement with our occupations and our current passion for the cell phone, iPod, computer and TV, we seem to have forgotten the many simple pleasures Bombay offers in terms of sights, smells and sounds. As textile mills come crashing down and gated residential and commercial colonies, shopping malls and multiplexes spring up, we are awed and overcome by the credit card revolution and the compulsion to consume. So, who then has the time to go off the beaten track to seek some joyful aspects of Bombay?

SIMPLE PLEASURES

Sharada Dwivedi

There's so much to experience in the city – the known as well as the unknown and undiscovered. There's our built heritage ranging from the ancient cave temples at Elephanta, Jogeshwari, Kanheri, Mahakali and Mandapeshwara, our large collection of Victorian Gothic architecture including Victoria Terminus, Crawford Market, the Municipal Headquarters, the old Secretariat, University Library & Convocation Hall, the High Court, Public Works Department Offices and the Central Telegraph Office to our Art Deco buildings – the second largest collection in the world after Miami. But there are also charming enclaves like Khotachi Wadi in Girgaum and Matharpakady in Mazagaon with their Portuguese style bungalow villas, that transport you back three centuries in time and a wide variety of religious edifices— wayside shrines, temples, mosques, durgahs synagogues, Jain deras and churches, scattered all over the city and bearing testimony to the many faiths followed in our cosmopolitan city.

We have so much natural beauty, beginning with the vast ocean that surrounds us, that changes its moods, colour and form with the tides and seasons. How many have seen the spectacular sunrise from Apollo Bunder in the winter months and the breathtaking salmon pink sunsets from Marine Drive with Malabar Hill in the distance and liners dotting the horizon? How many have experienced the extraordinary beauty of surviving mangroves, the incredible sight of flamingos at Sewri or the splendour of the Mahim Nature Park, Borivali National Park and the botanical gardens at Jijamata Udyan?

Do we have time to observe the seasonal blooming of our flowering trees which provide such a delight to the senses—the bright golden yellow Peltoforum or rusty shied bearers, which appear twice a year? The pink and mauve Jarul, the flaming Gul Mohr, the baby pink Cassia and lemon yellow Laburnum vibrantly herald the annual monsoon to the accompaniment of the koel's call.

An alternative to aimlessly strolling around the malls would be an occasional visit to some of the many vibrant markets spread around the metropolitan region, including the old ones like Crawford Market, Bhuleshwar or Chor Bazaar. The sounds and amazing aromas that some of our streets exude are unbelievable. The tempting fragrance of the flowers in Phool Gully or Dadar market, the delicious whiff of pakoras and vadas frying at roadside stalls, or the smell of freshly baked bread, mawa cake and steaming hot chai emanating from our many bakeries and Irani cafés, titillate the nose.

Take time to take a boat ride around the harbour or to visit the Banganga tank and temple complex, to listen to the fascinating tales and legends recounted by the residents. Watch the dhobis industriously at work at the Mahalaxmi dhobi ghat, or walk down the causeway at low tide to offer homage at the Haji Ali durgah. On Sundays and holidays, even the hundreds of impromptu and informal cricket matches played on empty streets, and every available open space raise one's spirits.

Marvel at Bombay's cultural heritage attending a dance or music performance or watching a play. Visit our treasure house of libraries at the Bombay University in the Fort, the Asiatic Society in the imposing Town Hall, the David Sassoon and J N Petit libraries or the Mumbai Marathi Granthasangrahalaya. Admire the treasures in the Prince of Wales Museum, the Discovery of India exhibit in the Nehru Centre at Worli, contemporary Indian art at the National Gallery of Modern Art, the Jehangir Art Gallery and other neighbouring galleries at Kala Ghoda. With Gandhigiri very much in the news, pay a visit to the museum in Mani Bhuvan in Gamdevi's Laburnum Road where Mahatma Gandhi lived from 1917 to 1937 and where he began the satyagraha and non-cooperation movements.

Such explorations of the city could perhaps occasionally offer more pleasure than our current forms of entertainment and time-pass.

Varsity to release its biography in pictures

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: The University of



Mumbai will release a photo-biography—University of Mumbai: Ornament of the City—on Sunday after the annual convocation

at the hands of deputy chairman of the planning commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia.

The volume, which will be released in English and Marathi, has 315 photographs ranging from those of the varsity's structures to historical documents, maps and rare books and articles in the university's possession. Sudhir Panse, who was entrusted the work of preparing the biography, said that the grandeur of the university is reflected in the pictures. Images of items found from the cellar like Dr Ambedkar's marklist, tram tickets, gold coins and rare books are also in the book.

There are also articles about the education system prevalent before the university came into existence. "All the pictures and articles are authentic; every part of the biography was confirmed before it went into print. This book is nothing less than a collectors' item," he said.

The varsity has spent Rs 30 lakh on the book which is priced at Rs 2,000. The first few copies will be sold at a concession of Rs 1,500. The university is also holding a four-day folk art festival from January 15 at the Kalina campus.

Source: The Times of India

A cog in time for heritage clocks

Anjali Joseph | TNN

Mumbai: "Sorry, Ma'am, *thoda late ho gaya!*"

When Bachchan Kumar, 54, comes hurrying into the David Sassoon Library and Reading Room, briefcase in hand, he somehow looks just as one would expect a clock restorer to. Settling down into one of the library's relaxed plantation chairs, Kumar says the David Sassoon Library's clock will be working again within 24 days. "We have made all the parts in Bareilly, and work has already begun," he says.

Meanwhile, Kumar has been out in the city arranging other projects. He rhapsodises about the clock of the nearby neoclassical Church of St Andrew and St Columba at Lion Gate, which has not been working for some time. "It is like Big Ben. It is a chiming clock with three enormous bells. It's a beautiful piece of machinery the likes of which I rarely see. I would love to restore it if the money can be found to do the work," he says thoughtfully.

Kumar is the fourth of five brothers who all continue the clock making and repairing business begun by their father, Shabban. "He was a self-taught mechanic and he made a lot of wonderful machines," says Kumar. His own three sons, who are still studying, will one day also join the family business, he says.

Clock repairing takes him all over the country. Recently, he worked on repairing a damaged clocktower after the

Bhuj earthquake, and also has work on hand in Valsad, Gujarat. All the parts needed for the repairs are manufactured by the family firm in Bareilly. "We analyse the composition of the parts and then make them," he says.

And how do old clocks compare with modern ones? "They don't compare at all. The old ones are such fine pieces of work—the kind of machines that can't be made nowadays. And modern clocks are just useless," he says. With that, Bachchan Kumar rushes off to another appointment.

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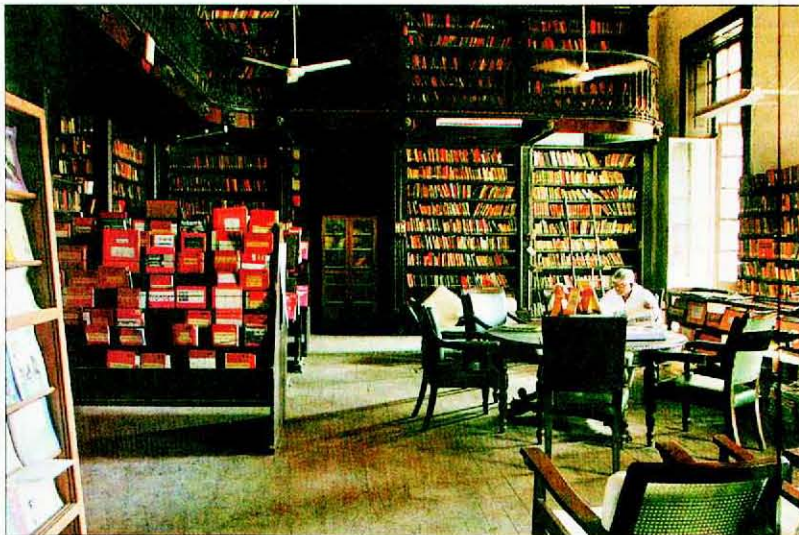


KEEPING TIME: Bachchan Kumar works on the 134-yr-old clock at Sassoon library

Bachchan Kumar, who will get the David Sassoon Library's clock working soon, rhapsodises about the chiming clock of the Church of St Andrew and St Columba, saying he would love to restore it if the money to carry out the work is available

Reading room

Libraries in the city may have fallen on hard times because of lack of funds, but they are still havens for avid readers



Asiatic Society, originally meant to be a town hall with a library and museum, has magazines and journals dating back to 1804.

Saturday night out at the forest

Aditya Ghosh
Mumbai, May 25

CARRY A tent, pitch it by a river, warm your coffee over a bonfire and savour silence away from urban madness — all without leaving Mumbai.

Armed with a Rs 8 crore grant from the state government, the Maharashtra forest department has begun work to convert Sanjay Gandhi National Park at Borivli into an eco-tourism hotspot with camping grounds, adventure trails and guided tours. No other national park in Maharashtra allows camping inside the forest. This is the first time the park has received money to promote eco-tourism.

"We will offer adventure to wildlife enthusiasts," said B. Majumdar, principal chief conservator of forests. "We are trying to achieve international standards."

The plan has been given a boost by the exit earlier this month of about one lakh slum-dwellers encroaching on the park, which has freed up more than 150 acres of parkland.

Spread over nearly 26,000 acres, the park teems with flora and fauna: it has 900 species of flowering plants, 28 kinds of birds, 5,000 insect species, 3 mammals, 50 reptiles and 150 species of butterfly. It is also the watershed for the Mithi, Powai and Tuli rivers.

It has set up an eco-tourism board to design and implement a plan, which envisages setting up camping grounds around Kishnagiri Upavan, the part of the forest near the entrance, as well as in some areas in the forest's buffer zone. Also planned is an uphill trekking route through the forest and other activities. The final plan will be ready soon, said Majumdar.

Officials said that there would be strict rules for campers. "Most visitors do not really care about nature. They litter, play loud music, pluck flowers, damage trees and hurt stones at deer," said S.K. Khetrapal, chief conservator who will head the eco-tourism board. "Such things will not be tolerated."

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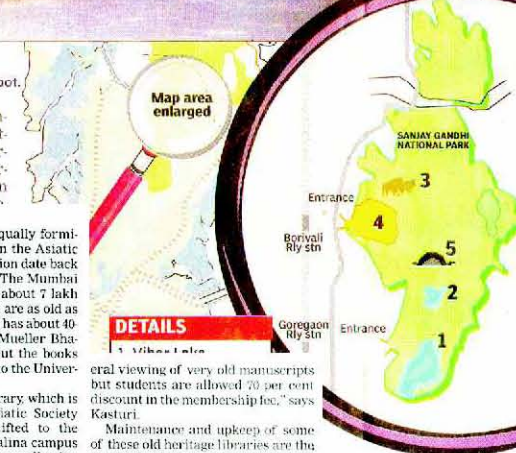


Plans are afoot to convert the Borivli national park into an eco-tourism hotspot.

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Map area enlarged

DETAILS

Entrance

Entrance

Entrance

Entrance

Source: The Times of India

Source: Hindustan Times

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