

LOVE  
MUMBAI

A HAND-BOOK FOR THE LUXURY VAGABOND

*FIONA CAULFIELD*



LOVE TRAVEL GUIDES

# LOVE MUMBAI

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## LOVE STORIES

### *Author's Note*

### *MUMBAI & BOMBAY – A Tale of Two Cities*

I	MUMBAI MUST'S <i>Briefing: Must-Know's, Must-Do's &amp; Planning Map</i>	9
II	DELICIOUS <i>SoBo Dining: Eating &amp; Drinking</i> <i>NoBo Dining: Eating &amp; Drinking</i>	17 35
III	FABULOUS <i>Shopping: Hunting &amp; Gathering</i>	43
IV	GORGEOUS <i>SoBo Pampering: Looking Good &amp; Feeling Good</i> <i>NoBo Pampering: Looking Good &amp; Feeling Good</i>	85 93
V	ADVENTUROUS <i>Discovering: Enjoying &amp; Exploring</i>	97
VI	WILDLY ADVENTUROUS <i>Escaping: Eight Adventures to Escape the City</i>	109
VII	ESSENTIAL <i>Living: Getting About, Communicating, Spending, Blending In &amp; Reading</i>	127
VIII	SLEEPING <i>SoBo Staying: Nesting &amp; Resting</i> <i>NoBo Staying: Nesting &amp; Resting</i>	139 143
IX	SHARE THE LOVE <i>Helping &amp; Conscious Travel:</i>	149
X	ALPHABETICAL INDEX	150
XI	AREA INDEX	154

# LOVE MUMBAI

*I believe falling in love with a city is just as exciting as falling in love with a person. Your senses become engaged and you simply feel more alive...*



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## *Author's Note*

The intention of this guide is to introduce you to the most authentic experiences in Mumbai so you can fall in love with this city. The selection criterion was easy – does the place help one fall in Love with Mumbai? If yes, it was in; if not, it was out. For every entry that made it, many did not.

All entries are based on merit, with no payments or incentives involved.

Special thanks to all of the 'Bombayites', 'Bombaywallahs' and 'Mumbaikars', who shared their Love stories with the city with me so I could include the special experiences you will find in these pages.

Change is inevitable; please let me know if you come across any outdated information. I welcome any and all suggestions for additions and omissions, contact me at [fiona@lovetravelguides.com](mailto:fiona@lovetravelguides.com)

For updates and to be part of the Love Travel Guides community, please register at [www.Lovetravelguides.com](http://www.Lovetravelguides.com)

Happy Journey,  
**Fiona Caulfield**

India, October 2008

**MUMBAI &  
BOMBAY –  
A TALE OF  
TWO CITIES**  
by Anand  
Giridharadas

*This megalopolis on the Arabian Sea is India's epicenter of business and entertainment.*

*It is a city of mind-bending extremes, where \$8 martinis coexist with eight million slum dwellers. It is the city of Asia's oldest stock exchange, the world's most prolific film industry and some of the priciest apartments on earth.*

*It is also a city hopelessly two-named.*

It has been more than a decade since India's wealthiest state, Maharashtra, sought to purge a colonial legacy by rebranding its flagship city as Mumbai.

Has the new name stuck? That depends.

To some, Mumbai is a fait accompli. "Nothing will come in the way of the new name," said Yashwant Sinha, a former foreign minister in the Bharatiya Janata Party. But a taxi driver from Sinha's home state, Jharkhand, had another view: he had not heard of it. "Whether there's been a change or not been a change, I don't know," said the man, who settled in the city in 1993. "We people have said Bombay from the start, and we'll keep saying Bombay."

The receding of colonial empires and the fall of Soviet communism sprinkled new names across the world map. Some (St. Petersburg) work better than others (Myanmar), but Mumbai is particularly vexing. If the outside world still wonders what to call it, it is because the city itself has no answer. Ask as many people as you like; it is impossible to judge whether the rechristening has succeeded or failed. It has, in fact, done both with panache. It is rare to find Bombay on the lips of a bureaucrat or the address of a parcel. It is equally hard to catch a taxi driver or investment banker uttering Mumbai.

Bombayites and Mumbaikars have agreed to disagree. But this much is clear: if Mumbai was intended to repaint a many-hued city in the monochrome of postcolonial pride, it has instead shown Bombay to be richly polychromatic. Name chaos is testimony to the city's unique, working-class cosmopolitanism: the live-and-let-live ethos of the crowded street. Bombay and Mumbai have become indicators of the city's kaleidoscopic diversity. Every vocation, ethnicity and neighborhood has its preferred usage. Bombay versus Mumbai is a sociological litmus paper, revealing to which of two parallel cities you belong.

Bombay is the city of seekers. It has long attracted outsiders – merchants and migrants, Christians and Muslims, Indians from all over. They have brought big dreams, shared tight quarters and learned the mercantile ethic of tolerance. It is the city of shopkeepers and industrialists long established, and of laborers and professionals recently arrived. Their Bombay is open-armed and rootless. "This city belongs to the entire nation," said Amit Badaskar, a Maharashtrian taxi driver.

Mumbai, by contrast, is the city of the rooted. Once home to the fishermen from whom Maharashtrians descend, its openness increasingly corrodes their traditions and sidelines them from power. It is the city of working-class Maharashtrians and of the political establishment they elect. Their Mumbai is proud and rooted.

Though the membrane between these cities is permeable, there are plainly two realms, of Bombayites and Mumbaikars, where one name slips out more readily than the other. Yet Bombay's magic lies in line-crossing, in taking pains to use a name suitable to someone else. A city of 17 million people sharing a slender, reclaimed island is a city acquainted with adjustment. To live in Bombay is perpetually to adjust – in its trains, lanes and cramped apartments.

Mumbai connotes seriousness and respectability, Bombay frivolity and glamour. Thus the *Times of India*, a national newspaper, writes Mumbai on front-page datelines, while branding its widely read entertainment insert *Bombay Times*. Mumbai connotes public purpose, Bombay private gain. In government meetings, big industrialists are sure to say Mumbai to placate high-ranking mandarins. But on its own letterhead the Bombay Chamber of Commerce and Industry refuses to go by Mumbai.

Ninety-seven per cent of intra-city mail uses Mumbai.

*Mumbai is what you write, Bombay what you say.*

"When you fill up forms, then you go with Mumbai," Malini, a middle-aged woman scanning titles at a Bombay bookshop, told me. "But when you're talking to someone, it's definitely Bombay."

The city is like a bride with a new surname, writing Mumbai in formal letters but letting Bombay slip out in speech.

*A business executive might convene a meeting in Mumbai, but she will summon a lover only to Bombay.*

Foreigners are baffled. Briefed on post-colonial sensitivities by guidebooks, they arrive with Mumbai rolling off their tongues. Then, moving through elite circles, they notice that no one else is saying it.

The world shares their hesitancy. Air tickets say Mumbai, but luggage tags read BOM.

Yet if outsiders are perplexed, the city's own embrace two-namedness. "When I write, I write both," Sujata Patel, a sociologist, told me. "Everyone uses both names in the streets of Bombay," she said. "So why should we be different?"

## Notes



## I MUMBAI MUST'S

### Briefing:

*Mumbai is the biggest, wealthiest, and fastest city in India, often compared with New York in terms of its energy. Bombay also is a city that does not sleep – the famous lyrics ‘If I can make it there, I’ll make it anywhere’ also hold true of Bombay. The similarities continue with the high-rise sky line. I have borrowed from Manhattan an idea to name South Bombay, SoBo and North Bombay, NoBo.*

*This 437km square island city is densely populated and simply understanding how the city works and plays is fascinating. Here is what I believe you ‘must-know’ about the city and also the recommended ‘must-do’s’. Enjoy!*

### Must-Know’s

City of the Sea .....	10
The Island of Good Life .....	10
‘Bombay is a Crowd’ .....	10
Ganesh Mania .....	10
City of Empire .....	10
Home to the Indian Railway .....	10
City of Gold .....	11
Asia’s Largest Slum .....	11
Bollywood vs Hollywood .....	11
Fashion Capital of India .....	11
City of Three Seasons .....	11
Crime & Punishment .....	11
World City .....	11
City of Dreams .....	11

### Must-Do’s

#### MORNING

At Sea; Day at the Races; Morning Markets; Mosque & Temple; Sunday Service; Marine Drive & Malabar Hill Meander .....	12
--	----

#### DAY

Dabbawallahs & Dhobis; Bazaar Day; Train Journey; Village Life; Cultural Safari; Old Bombay; Gandhi House .....	12
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#### EVENING

Glam SoBo; Real SoBo & Colaba Night .....	13
Glam NoBo; Arty Juhu & Bandra Night .....	13

Planning Map .....	14
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## Must-Know's

### City of the Sea

The city began as a small settlement of fisher folk, the *Kolis*, who worshipped the mother goddess 'Mumba Aai' or 'Mumbai Devi' (the inspiration for the city's name change in 1995). With growing prosperity, the city grew through land reclamation, the original islands becoming a single land mass and now continues to expand across the harbour with Navi Mumbai.

### The Island of Good Life

Vasco da Gama discovered the direct sea route to India in the late 15th-century and in 1634, the Portuguese were 'given' the seven-island archipelago and proclaimed it to be an '*Ilha da boa vida*' with cheerful reports of beauty and abundance. In 1661 the King of Portugal gave the islands of Mumbai to King Charles II of England as part of the marriage dowry of his daughter.

### 'Bombay is a Crowd'<sup>1</sup>

The population of Greater Mumbai is 19 million, bigger than 173 countries, and is predicted to become the world's most populous city by 2020.

1. *India: A Million Mutinies Now* by V. S. Naipaul



Ganesh

### Ganesh Mania

Ganesh, the god of new beginnings and the remover of obstacles, is the patron deity of Mumbai (and of writers). *Ganesh Chaturthi* is the biggest festival in the city, celebrating the birthday of the much-loved god. Held annually in August/September, over the 10-day festival close to 10,000 Ganesh statues are paraded on the streets before being taken to the sea for immersion.

### City of Empire

The East India Company leased the city in 1668 and it soon became the centre for west coast trade. By the mid-19th-century Bombay was booming, cotton mania was in full force; after London, it was the biggest city of the Empire. Splendid Neo-Gothic buildings were constructed including the Victoria Terminus, the University, and the High Court.

### Home to the Indian Railway

The first train journey in India took place in 1853 from Bombay to Thane and carried 400 people. The Mumbai commuter trains, running on three lines, now transport over six million people per day.

### City of Gold

Always a market place and counting house, *Mumbai is now the commercial and financial capital of India*. The Bombay Stock Exchange is the oldest exchange in Asia and the second largest in the world. Mumbai is home to 40% of India's wealthiest business people, real estate is more expensive than Manhattan – Mumbai alone pays over 38% of the nation's taxes. Mukesh Ambani, India's richest man, has the world's first billion dollar home, a 27-story skyscraper, called Antilla, located on Altamount Road, the address of India's corporate elite.

### Asia's Largest Slum

Spread over 175 hectares, Dharavi in Mumbai, houses over one million people. 54% of Mumbai's population live in slums, where most inhabitants exist in one-room tenements. Dharavi is at the heart of small-scale industry in Mumbai, with an annual turnover of US\$665 million.

### Bollywood vs Hollywood

Bollywood began in Mumbai in 1899, about a decade before Hollywood, with a film called '*The Wrestlers*' shot in Hanging Gardens. Bollywood makes 1,000 films a year, double Hollywood's output.

### Fashion Capital of India

Mumbai makes full use of the Bollywood glitterati to showcase its wares. *Fashion Week* takes place twice a year, Spring/ Summer in March and Autumn/Winter in October, and is now an important fixture on the global fashion calendar.

### City of Three Seasons

Latitude 18° 56" N, Longitude 72° 51' S, Altitude 3m. *Mumbai has three seasons* – *Winter* (Nov - Feb) is very pleasant; *Summer* (March - mid June) is hot and humid and the *Monsoon* (mid June - mid Sept) is when Mumbai gets a lot of rain. On July 27, 2005, Mumbai had 37 inches in one day.

### Crime & Punishment

*'Bombay's menace is not street crime. It's bigger and more organised than that.'*<sup>2</sup> Best-selling books, *Maximum City* and *Shantaram*, expose the Mumbai underworld in all of its complex glory. Bollywood was funded by it, celebrates it on celluloid, and now has some of its most famous stars in Arthur Road Jail. Mumbai is a city of riots and bombs; drugs and prostitution; where extortion payments are tax deductible; and police 'encounter' (assassination) teams are legendary.

### World City

*'A city of perpetual immigration.'*<sup>3</sup> Mumbai has long been regarded as a meeting point for the world, an amalgam of the best and worst of both the East and West. It is a magnet for people of many races, religions, castes, and languages from all over India and the world.

### City of Dreams

The steady movement, estimated to be over 300 families a week, from the villages to Bombay is about dreams. The dream of becoming a Bollywood star or simply having a better life, getting work, making money and gaining freedom from the cages of caste, gender, and religion.

2. *Maximum City* by Suketu Mehta  
3. *City of Gold* by Gillian Tindall

## Mosque & Temple

The scenic 377-year-old Haji Ali Mosque is located on a little islet off the coast at Worli. It is reached by a 500-yard narrow causeway, lined by beggars and accessible only at low tide. Next go to the 200-year-old temple at Prabhadevi, one of the most popular Ganesha temples in the city. On Tuesday, the most auspicious day, there are serpentine queues, which foreign visitors can skip. *Inside the temple make sure you whisper your wish into the mouse's ear.*

## Sunday Service

The Afghan Church, built in 1847, is one of the prettiest in the country, tucked away in the Colaba woods. *The Remembrance Day service is quite special, complete with Indian bagpipers.*

## Marine Drive & Malabar Hill Meander

Join Mumbaikars on their ritual stroll along Marine Drive and head up to Malabar Hill. The Jain temple on Ridge Road is beautiful and has spectacular views. Then head to peaceful Banganga tank, one of the most important spiritual places in the city.

## DAY

### Dabbawallahs & Dhobis

*See how Mumbai lives and works.* Be outside Churchgate Train Station at noon to see the Dabbawallahs delivering over 150,000 lunches. Harvard, Princeton and Yale have studied them and Forbes gave them a Six Sigma performance rating. Next go to the Dhobi Ghat to see the biggest open-air laundry in the world with 5,000 Dhobi Wallahs, all men, pounding the city's washing clean.

### Bazaar Day

*Mumbai is a shopper's paradise and nothing beats the energy and the magic of the bazaars and markets (pg82).* Make sure to visit the Mumbadevi Temple, named after the same goddess as the city and then enjoy the best *thali* in town at Shree Thakker Bhojanalay (pg22).

## Must-Do's

### MORNING

#### At Sea

Arrive at the Gateway of India at dawn to see the gaily coloured ferries bathed in pink light. Then make the ferry crossing to Elephanta Island to see the 4th-century cave temples.

#### Day at the Races

Head to Gallops (pg20) for breakfast on race day and enjoy the social scene of the turf club. *Derby Day* is the peak event held annually, in February.

#### Morning Markets

Visit Sassoon Market to see the *Koli* fisher folk bringing in the catch and then off to historic Crawford market to see the abundance of fresh fruit and vegetables. Wonderful in the mango season of June and July. Then off to Café Madras (pg21) for a delicious South Indian breakfast. If short on time, head into Badshah (pg26) for a juice and a snack.

### Train Journey

Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (formerly Victoria Terminus) is one of the world's grandest train stations. Board a train to Matunga and emerge, 20 mins later, in South India. This charming area has garlands of flowers for sale, temple bells happily ringing and truly excellent food. Lunch at A Ramanayak Udipi Shri Krishna Boarding (pg18).

### Village Life

Take a stroll through the lanes of Khotachiwadi, visit the Ferreira house (pg99) and then have an early lunch at Anant Ashram (pg19).

### Cultural Safari

Choose your art galleries (pg71) and antique shops (pg68) then recharge at Café Samovar (pg19). Make sure to see the Sassoon Library and the sky blue synagogue nearby.

### Old Bombay

Take a walk past the maidan, the University and the High Court. Visit the grand museum (pg107). Make time to visit the graceful and timeless Asiatic library and then lunch at Café Britannia (pg22) in historic Ballard Estate.

### Gandhi House

Mahatma Gandhi lived at Mani Bhavan from 1917 to 1934, and from here he launched the Satyagraha movement and learnt to spin using a *charkha*. Afterwards head to the nearby By the Way Café (pg27).

## EVENING

### SoBo

#### Glam

Sunset drinks at The Dome (pg33) followed by dinner at Trishna (pg28) and then for the glitterati scene more drinks at Indigo (pg34).

### Real

Sunset at Chowpatty to soak in the scene, followed by dinner at Shalimar (pg29), dessert at Taj Ice Cream (pg32) or at Bachelor's (pg32) on the way home.

### Colaba Night

Stroll along Colaba causeway market, catch a Bollywood movie at Regal Cinema (pg106) and then head for an evening of beer at Leopold (pg33) or Mondegar (pg33).

### NoBo

#### Glam

Sunset drinks beach side at Vie (pg40) and then to Don Giovanni (pg40) for a sensual Italian dinner and off to Enigma (pg41) to party.

### Arty Juhu

Sunset drinks at Sun'n'Sand, a show at Prithvi Theatre (pg105) then a coastal dinner at Mahesh (pg38).

### Bandra Night

Drinks at Toto's Garage (pg41) and the Hawaiian Shack (pg41) in Bandra, dinner and some good music at Soul Fry (pg41). A nightcap at Zenzi (pg41) to finish.