

Five Family Days in Mumbai: Caves, Coastline and Curry Leaves

Mumbai, Maharashtra — The City of Dreams

A moderately paced five-day loop through Mumbai's heritage core, its one unmissable island temple, and the northern suburbs, built around mid-range stays and sit-down meals rather than rushed sightseeing. Expect a mix of walking, short cab hops and one full-day excursion, with evenings kept lighter for families with children or older parents in tow.

Suits: Mid-range families and groups of friends who want culture, food and a proper day trip, but need built-in rest breaks between sights

What it costs, per person

Stay: Rs 12,500 · Food: Rs 4,150 · Local transport: Rs 1,495 · Tickets: Rs 340 · **Total: Rs 18,485**

Day 1 · Colonial Mumbai: Gateway, Museum and Markets

Heritage and shopping in South Mumbai

08:00 Gateway of India

Start early at this basalt harbour-front arch before the heat and crowds build; it's free, flat and easy for prams or elderly parents, and doubles as the ferry point for tomorrow's Elephanta trip. Ten minutes here is enough for photos and a sea breeze.

Apollo Bunder, Colaba · 45 min · Rs 0

With family: Touts near the Gateway offer unofficial boat tickets and tours; buy tickets only at official counters.

08:45 Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CST) - exterior

A short walk to see this UNESCO-listed Victorian Gothic railway building from outside; even a working station, its façade is worth ten minutes with a camera. Skip going inside during commuter rush.

Fort, Mumbai · 30 min · Rs 0 · Walk, 15 minutes, free

With family: Morning rush (roughly 8-10am) makes the concourse crowded and uncomfortable with small children; view from the road side rather than pushing inside.

09:30 Breakfast + Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS)

Grab a quick Irani-café breakfast near Kala Ghoda, then spend a couple of unhurried hours in Mumbai's flagship museum, covering sculpture, miniature paintings and natural history in a grand Indo-Saracenic building. There's an on-site cafeteria if anyone needs a break mid-visit.

Kala Ghoda, Mumbai · 150 min · Rs 200 · Taxi/app cab, 10 minutes, approx 60 INR

With family: Large, air-conditioned and stroller-friendly; a good midday stop to escape the heat.

14:30 Colaba Causeway & Fashion Street

An afternoon of bargaining for clothes, jewellery and souvenirs along the stalls, mixed with fixed-price boutiques and cafes for a breather. Bargaining is expected at the stalls but not at the shopfronts.

Colaba · 90 min · Rs 0 · Taxi/app cab, 10 minutes, approx 50 INR

With family: Keep bags zipped and in front; this stretch is a known pickpocketing spot in the crowds.

Where to eat

Breakfast: Bun maska and chai at an Irani café — Near Kala Ghoda (Rs 150)

Lunch: Sit-down thali or Parsi-style lunch — Colaba (Rs 300)

Dinner: Bademiya kebabs or a Leopold Cafe-style meal — Colaba (Rs 400)

Where to stay

Hotel Suba Palace, Colaba — Rs 2,500 a night. Simple, well-located mid-range option with private AC rooms, an easy walk from Gateway of India and Colaba's markets, keeping this heritage-heavy day walkable.

Save a little: Skip the audio guide at CSMVS (saves 50 INR) and eat at Irani cafes rather than tourist restaurants for breakfast and light meals.

Day total, per person: Rs 3,660

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Day 2 · Elephanta Island Day

UNESCO cave temples and a seafront evening

07:30 Ferry to Elephanta Caves

Board the first available ferry from the Gateway of India to beat the heat and crowds; the crossing takes about an hour with harbour views along the way.

Gateway of India to Elephanta Island · 60 min · Rs 180 · Walk from hotel, 10 minutes, free

With family: Ferries can be delayed or cancelled in rough weather; this trip is best avoided outright in the monsoon months.

08:30 Elephanta Caves

A short uphill walk or toy train ride leads to the 6th-8th century rock-cut cave temples, with a large sculpted Shiva figure as the centrepiece. Budget the better part of the morning to explore without rushing.

Elephanta Island · 240 min · Rs 40 · Short walk/toy train on arrival, 10-15 minutes, approx 10 INR each way for the toy train

With family: Uneven stone steps and some climbing; hard going for elderly parents with knee trouble. Monkeys here will grab food or open bags, so keep snacks zipped away. Closed on Mondays, so don't plan this excursion for that day.

13:00 Ferry back to Gateway of India

Head back on an early-afternoon ferry to avoid the worst midday heat on the return crossing and give the rest of the day for a slower pace.

Elephanta Island to Gateway of India · 60 min · Rs 0 · Included in round-trip ferry fare

17:30 Marine Drive evening walk

Wind down on this flat, 3-km seafront promenade known as the Queen's Necklace, at its best as the sun sets and Mumbaikars come out to sit on the sea wall.

Marine Drive · 60 min · Rs 0 · Taxi/app cab, 10 minutes, approx 50 INR

With family: Flat and pram-friendly, an easy stop for elderly parents who've done enough walking on the island already.

Where to eat

Breakfast: Light breakfast before the ferry - toast and chai — Colaba (Rs 100)

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

Dinner: Sit-down seafood or Gujarati thali dinner — Marine Drive area (Rs 400)

Where to stay

Hotel Suba Palace, Colaba — Rs 2,500 a night. Same central base keeps the early-morning ferry departure and the evening Marine Drive stroll both close by.

Save a little: Carry water and snacks from the mainland rather than buying at the more expensive island stalls, and skip the toy train in favour of the 15-minute walk if no one has mobility trouble.

Day total, per person: Rs 3,520

Day 3 · Temples, the Sea Link and a Suburban Evening

Faith, coastline and Bandra-Juhu food

08:00 Siddhivinayak Temple

One of Mumbai's most visited Ganesha temples; going early on a weekday gives a calmer darshan than the crowds later in the day, especially compared to Tuesdays.

Prabhadevi · 60 min · Rs 0 · Taxi/app cab, 20 minutes, approx 85 INR (shared among the group)

With family: Expect some queuing and jostling even on a quiet morning; hold children's hands closely near the entrance.

09:15 Haji Ali Dargah

A white marble shrine reached by a causeway that's only walkable at low tide. Check tide timings before setting out so the walk back isn't rushed.

Worli · 60 min · Rs 0 · Taxi/app cab, 15 minutes, approx 50 INR (shared)

With family: Skip this stop entirely if it's high tide when you arrive; the causeway floods and there's no safe way across. Not ideal for anyone unsteady on their feet.

10:30 Drive over the Bandra-Worli Sea Link to Bandra

There's no pedestrian access, so this cable-stayed bridge is best enjoyed from inside the cab as you cross into the northern suburbs, with good skyline views back towards South Mumbai.

Bandra-Worli Sea Link · 20 min · Rs 70 · Taxi/app cab, 25 minutes including the bridge crossing, approx 70 INR (shared)

With family: A good, low-effort stop for anyone who's tired of walking; enjoy it from the car.

17:00 Juhu Beach

A wide, busy beach that comes alive in the evening with street food carts, pony rides and people-watching rather than swimming.

Juhu · 90 min · Rs 0 · Taxi/app cab, 20 minutes, approx 50 INR (shared)

With family: Sand and water aren't particularly clean, so treat this as a food-and-atmosphere stop rather than a swimming beach; keep young children away from the waterline.

Where to eat

Breakfast: Light breakfast before the temples — Prabhadevi (Rs 100)

Lunch: Sit-down cafe lunch in Bandra — Pali Village/Bandra market area (Rs 350)

Dinner: Pav bhaji, bhel puri and vada pav at the beach stalls — Juhu Beach (Rs 350)

Where to stay

Hotel Suba Palace, Colaba — Rs 2,500 a night. Returning to the same Colaba base keeps the itinerary simple even on a day that ranges across the city.

Save a little: Split cabs across the family for every hop today; per-person fares fall sharply when shared among three or four people, which is how the transport figures above are calculated.

Day total, per person: Rs 3,675

Day 4 · Green Escape and the Golden Pagoda

A half-day in the national park and a suburban ferry crossing

08:30 Sanjay Gandhi National Park & Kanheri Caves

A forested park inside the city limits with walking trails, a toy train, boating and a lion-and-tiger safari, plus the ancient Kanheri rock-cut caves reached by a short shuttle ride inside the park. Treat this as the day's main outing and budget a proper half-day.

Borivali · 240 min · Rs 100 · Taxi/app cab, 45-60 minutes, approx 180 INR per person (shared among the group)

With family: Kanheri Caves are closed on Mondays, so avoid this day for the park if that's the only day free. The caves involve uneven stone steps; safari and boating have their own small extra charges payable on-site.

14:00 Global Vipassana Pagoda

A large, golden-domed, pillar-free meditation hall near Gorai, reached by a short ferry ride from Marve/Borivali, with a small museum on the life of the Buddha attached. The ferry crossing itself is part of the appeal for children.

Gorai · 90 min · Rs 100 · Taxi 20 minutes (approx 70 INR shared) + ferry 15 minutes (approx 40 INR)

With family: The meditation hall itself is free; the museum ticket is modest but check ahead as the museum section closes on some weekdays.

Where to eat

Breakfast: Quick breakfast before setting off north — Colaba/en route (Rs 150)

Lunch: Sit-down lunch near the park — Borivali (Rs 350)

Dinner: Relaxed dinner back near the hotel after the long day — Colaba (Rs 400)

Where to stay

Hotel Suba Palace, Colaba — Rs 2,500 a night. Worth the longer commute back given how central and value-for-money the base is for the rest of the trip.

Save a little: The suburban train from Churchgate to Borivali is far cheaper than a cab (about 50 INR) if no one in the group has luggage or mobility concerns and can manage standing for part of the ride.

Day total, per person: Rs 3,970

Day 5 · Kala Ghoda, Crawford Market and an Evening of Street Food

Art, markets and Mumbai's famous snacks

09:30 Kala Ghoda Art District

A relaxed morning wander through this art precinct's galleries, heritage buildings and café-lined lanes, an easy, unhurried add-on to round out the culture theme.

Kala Ghoda, Fort · 90 min · Rs 0

With family: Flat and walkable, with plenty of café stops if anyone needs to sit down.

11:00 Crawford Market

A dense, atmospheric wholesale-turned-retail market for spices, dried fruit, fabric and household goods, worth a browse even if you're not buying.

Fort · 60 min · Rs 0 · Walk, 10 minutes, free

With family: A known pickpocketing spot in the crowds, similar to Colaba Causeway; keep bags zipped and in front, and keep small children close by the hand.

17:00 Chowpatty (Girgaum) evening food stalls

Mumbai's classic evening food stop, with bhel puri, pav bhaji and sugarcane juice stalls lined up along the beach as the sun goes down.

Girgaum Chowpatty · 90 min · Rs 0 · Taxi/app cab, 15 minutes, approx 80 INR

With family: Busy but generally safe in the early evening; stick to stalls that are visibly busy and cooking fresh in front of you.

Where to eat

Breakfast: Café breakfast in Kala Ghoda — Kala Ghoda (Rs 150)

Lunch: Parsi-style lunch at an old-school cafe — Near Fort/Ballard Estate (Rs 350)

Dinner: Bhel puri, pav bhaji and sugarcane juice as an early dinner — Girgaum Chowpatty (Rs 350)

Where to stay

Hotel Suba Palace, Colaba — Rs 2,500 a night. Last night in the same central base keeps packing and check-out simple before departure.

Save a little: Treat Chowpatty stalls as dinner rather than paying separately for a sit-down dinner elsewhere; a full round of snacks per person rarely crosses 300 INR.

Day total, per person: Rs 3,660

Pack for this trip

- Comfortable, closed walking shoes for uneven ground at Elephanta and Kanheri Caves
- A light scarf or stole for temple visits (Siddhivinayak, Haji Ali)
- A reusable water bottle; refill stations and bottled water are widely available
- A compact umbrella or light raincoat if travelling outside the Oct-Feb window
- Hand sanitiser and tissues for street food stops and market areas
- A cross-body or zipped bag for crowded spots like Colaba Causeway and Crawford Market

Stay safe

- Hold children's hands near roads; pavements are inconsistent and crossings can be chaotic even at signals
- Keep bags zipped and in front in crowded areas like Colaba Causeway, Crawford Market and local trains
- Check Haji Ali Dargah's tide timings before setting out; the causeway is impassable at high tide
- Elephanta and Kanheri Caves involve uneven stone steps and some climbing, tough for elderly parents or anyone with knee trouble; go slowly and use handrails where available
- Keep food and bags closed near the caves; monkeys will grab anything left open
- Avoid unmetered taxis parked outside stations and hotels; insist on the meter or use an app cab
- Steer clear of touts near Gateway of India offering unofficial tours or boat tickets; use official counters only

Local courtesies

- Remove shoes before entering temples like Siddhivinayak and the Haji Ali Dargah
- Dress modestly (shoulders and knees covered) at religious sites
- Bargaining is expected at market stalls (Colaba Causeway, Fashion Street) but not in fixed-price shops or restaurants
- Hindi is understood almost everywhere, and English works well in hotels, restaurants and with most tourist-facing staff
- It's polite to ask before photographing worshippers at temples or dargahs

If it rains

- Swap Elephanta Caves for CSMVS Museum or another indoor cultural stop, since ferries can be suspended in rough monsoon seas
- Kala Ghoda's galleries and cafes make for a good sheltered half-day
- Global Vipassana Pagoda's main hall is covered and works well as a rain-day option, though the ferry crossing may be choppy
- Malls and mid-range restaurants in Bandra or Colaba are easy fallbacks for a washed-out afternoon
- Carry a light raincoat rather than a large umbrella, as Mumbai's monsoon rain can be sudden and heavy

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