



Picture this: Manic day in Mumbai

Don't expect dreamy temples and swirling saris in Mumbai; India's glitzy fashion and business capital is where the local divas wear Prada and flaunt their new money. You can jump in at the deep end straight off the plane – UK flights tend to land early, so you'll beat the traffic as you sweep into the city centre, across the sparkling new **Rajiv Gandhi ocean road bridge**. Grab fabulous views of fishing villages, lying forgotten at the feet of shimmering skyscrapers, before whisking past the **Haji Ali island mosque**, linked to the mainland by a pencil-thin causeway. Look out for pilgrims, swathed in morning sea mist, and ask the driver to take a detour to Altamount Road to see the world's priciest *pied-à-terre*: the new 27-storey **Antilia building**, home of India's richest man, Mukesh Ambani.

Check in to South Mumbai's new boutique hotel **Abode** (abodeboutiquehotels.com; doubles from £35, room only), decorated with colonial-era furnishings, Kipling quotes and Mumbai kitsch. Then take morning tiffin at the **Sea Lounge** of the Taj hotel, and gaze dreamily at the **Gateway of India**, glowing in the golden, early-morning light against bobbing fishing boats and a glistening ocean. It's one of a string of eye-catching relics of the Raj that litter South Mumbai, lost among the fashion boutiques, slick restaurants and galleries. Drop in on **Bodhi Space** gallery (bodhiart.in) for the best of India's shock of new artists. Buy sorbet-soft dresses, made

for Bollywood stars, at fashion boutique of the moment, **Obataimu** (obataimu.com). And wander around **Horniman Circle**, a stately Edwardian terrace of very British houses ringing a leafy park watched over by a Georgian cathedral. You could be in Tunbridge Wells. If it wasn't so sweltering.

Cool off over an air-conditioned and un-Indian lunch of yellowfin tuna *tataki* at **The Table** (thetable.in; mains about £6). In the afternoon, take a boat trip from the Gateway of India out over the bay to **Elephanta Island** – its low hills are honeycombed with caves filled with rock-hewn gods and goddesses. See sunset at packed Chowpatty beach, then put on your jewels and let down your hair at **Aer** (fourseasons.com), Mumbai's hottest rooftop bar, where Bollywood beauties in ice-cube diamonds and the high-rise lights of the Mumbai skyline glitter against the velvety night.

Inside track: Slum tours

Mumbai's poverty gap is startling and the vast, shanty towns of rickety iron and cheap, makeshift walls that squat between the gleaming towers are testament to how 90 per cent of the city lives. Slum tours offer a sobering insight. Choose an operator from the slum communities themselves – **Bethelocal** (bethelocaltoursandtravels.com; tours from £5) is owned and run by residents of the Dharavi slum, the largest in the city. Eye-opening and visceral, the tour gives a human face to the poverty – and you'll hear some amazing stories.
Alex Robinson

Dusky beauty:
Chowpatty beach
buzzes with crowds
cooling off at the
end of the day