

# VIRTUOSO

THE MAGAZINE



TRAILS LESS TAKEN





# Mumbai in Motion

India's financial capital is forever reinventing itself.

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**C**HANGES ARE COMING in Mumbai, where construction projects have sprung up in every neighborhood (yes, the traffic is brutal). But even as glossy new roads and developments wait to reveal themselves, there's plenty of action drawing visitors to the city. The dining realm is more inventive than ever, with some of Mumbai's standout talents debuting thrilling offerings, and shoppers are browsing a host of chic new boutiques elevating local design talents. But it's the creative scene that's catapulting the city to new heights as a global cultural capital – the inaugural **Art Mumbai** art fair launched in November, while the **Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre**, which also opened last year, has brought works ranging from Andy Warhol and Yayoi Kusama pieces to *Mamma Mia!* to Mumbai audiences.

**EAT** Everything the team behind Mumbai's beloved Bombay Canteen touches turns to culinary gold, including recent forays into confectionery (Bombay Sweet Shop) and sandwiches (Veronica's). This spring, chef Hussain Shahzad opened **Papa's**, an easy-to-miss eatery in Bandra, hidden away in an intimate room above Veronica's.

There, he gathers 12 diners around a chef's counter, where he plies them with playful dishes such as the Bugs Bunny (charcoal-grilled rabbit in a weaver-ant marinade) and Hakuna Matata (lion's mane mushrooms with gooseberry sauce).

In 2016, **Masque** revolutionized the Mumbai dining landscape by introducing the city's first high-end tasting menus celebrating regional Indian ingredients. But despite amassing countless global accolades – including landing at number 23 on Asia's 50 Best Restaurants list this year – the restaurant in Mahalakshmi, now helmed by chef Varun Totlani, continues to evolve. Settle in for a ten-course menu full of unexpected flavor combinations such as strawberry *chaat*, barramundi *pani puri*, and spicy duck floss with coconut stew.

**DRINK** Puerto Rican American chef Alex Sanchez's restaurant **Americano** has had an obsessive following ever since it opened in 2019, drawing loyalists for its bar scene as much as its Italian menu. His newest offering, **Otra**, which opened in May around the corner from **Americano** in the Kala Ghoda neighborhood, spotlights



The Oriental Building and the Papa's Hut at Papa's. Opposite: A colorful display at Doki Doki.

# THIS IS IT.



Chef Varun Totlani at Masque.

Latin American flavors, but the bar – a sexy granite-and-green-onyx arc at the heart of the dimly lit space – is a prime draw in its own right. Diners chase orders of tostadas and tostones with Azteca slushies, made with poblano liqueur, or Nixta-and-passion-fruit margaritas.

**Araku** has earned global acclaim for its specialty coffee grown in southeastern India, but when the brand opened its cheery Mumbai flagship last December on a tony lane in Colaba, there was more than cold brew on the menu to slake patrons' thirst. They begin lining up early in the morning for their caffeine-and-croissant fix, but as the day goes on, the bar fills with office workers unwinding over coconut-and-cardamom Negronis or curry-leaf-and-gin cocktails.

**SHOP** Set in a former ice factory in the Ballard Estate neighborhood, the **Doki Doki** concept store takes shoppers on a spin through some of India's hippest contemporary fashion labels. In a sleek, industrial-chic space, sculptural blue metal pipes double as racks displaying edgy designs from Polite Society, Akaaro, Linetribe, and more.

With the opening of a sprawling new flagship near Horniman Circle last year, steps from Hermès and Christian Louboutin,

**Sabyasachi** became an instant draw for fashionistas and history buffs in equal measure. The three-story boutique is filled with a trove of antiques, art, and vintage furniture alongside the revered couturier's *lehengas* and saris. The museum-like space is a sight to behold – and it's hard to resist bringing back a sequined tote or glittering earrings.

**STAY** Overlooking the Arabian Sea in the heart of Nariman Point, **The Oberoi, Mumbai** blurs the line between business hotel and leisure escape. Mumbai's frenetic pace fades away in the 219-room property's atrium lobby, with its signature cherry-red grand piano. *Virtuoso travelers receive breakfast daily and a \$100 hotel credit.*

The storied **Taj Mahal Palace** is as much of a landmark as the Gateway of India monument it faces. The 121-year-old, 543-room structure, a cakelike Indo-Saracenic architectural marvel, has played host to pretty much anyone of note who's passed through the city, including the Dalai Lama, the Obamas, and George Harrison. From perches at the pool, over drinks at the Sea Lounge, or while dining at Wasabi by Morimoto or Golden Dragon, travelers are likely to spy a handful of Bollywood stars too. *Virtuoso travelers receive breakfast daily and one lunch or dinner.* ♡