

I KNOW A PLACE

MUMBAI



She's lived in the city all her life, so we asked **PRACHI JOSHI** to show us around Matunga, the neighbourhood she has called home for the past six years.

I moved to Matunga after I got married, but it has been my stomping ground since I went to college in the vicinity. It was one of the first planned localities in the city, with wide, tree-lined roads, a number of parks and gardens, and elegant two- and three-storey apartment buildings. Despite the fast-paced

development throughout Mumbai, this is one of the few neighbourhoods that still retains its traditional flavour – whether it's in the Matunga market area, with its South Indian temples and cafés, or in the leafy by-lanes of Five Gardens, with its heritage Parsi homes and art deco buildings.

PRACHI JOSHI



Asthika Samaj Temple
The facade of Asthika Samaj Temple, a 95-year-old place of worship dedicated to Lord Ram, is almost entirely covered with colourful sculptures of numerous deities. Inside, the atmosphere is peaceful and redolent with incense. Ram Navami (usually in March or April) is celebrated with much fanfare and special rituals over nine days. *Bhandarkar Marg, Matunga; +91 22 24014170*

Matunga Flower Market
Stroll towards Matunga railway station and you'll see an eye-catching array of flower shops lining the footpath. A heady scent fills the air from the thick garlands of roses and marigolds and delicate *gajras* (strings) of jasmine and *aboli* (firecracker flower) that adorn the shops. The South Indian Flower Shop is the oldest shop here and dates to 1942. *Bhandarkar Marg and Telang Road, Matunga*

Amba Bhavan
I have a favourite dish at each of the dozen or so South Indian cafés in Matunga. But if I had to recommend just one, it would be Amba Bhavan Coffee Club. I often share a table here with local sexagenarians as we polish off plates of fluffy *neer dosa* (rice crepe) served with piping hot *sambar* (lentil stew), washed down with tumblers of filter *kaapi* (frothy, slightly sweetened coffee). *Patel Mahal, Bhandarkar Marg, Matunga, Mumbai; +917738385955; closed on Thursdays*



After taking a sabbatical from her banking job six years ago, **PRACHI JOSHI** stumbled into the world of blogging and feature writing. She writes about all the good things in life and blogs at deliciouslydirectionless.com

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Five Gardens

The eponymous five gardens offer a much-needed green respite, with their canopy of rain trees, copper pods, palms, flame trees and more. The gardens form a community hub, welcoming everyone from kids, who jump around the jungle gym, to space-starved young lovers and senior citizens' laughter clubs. Magic Tours of India offers a guided nature walk, along with a dash of local history and culture. *Magic Tours of India*; +919867707414; mumbaimagic.com

Koolar & Co

A local institution, Koolar & Co opened in 1932 as King George's Café and was rechristened after independence. Inside, there are vintage posters and mirrors on the walls, a chequered floor, and creaky bentwood chairs. Try the *brun maska chai* (crusty bun slathered with butter and served with tea), *kheema pao* (minced meat with bread), and raspberry soda. If you're ravenous, the Irani Wrestler's Omelette, made with six eggs and a load of butter, should do the trick. 541, Dr Ambedkar Road, Kings Circle, Matunga; +919892987007

Mysore Concerns

While walking around Kings Circle, follow your nose to the coffee heaven called Mysore Concerns. The entire area smells of freshly roasted and ground coffee emanating from the humble store that's been around since 1939. The proprietors source beans from the southern states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala to make an aromatic filter kaapi blend. Plot No. 391, Circle House, Sri Shankar Mutt Road, Matunga; +919892011977; closed on Mondays



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