

FREE WORLD

MUMBAI

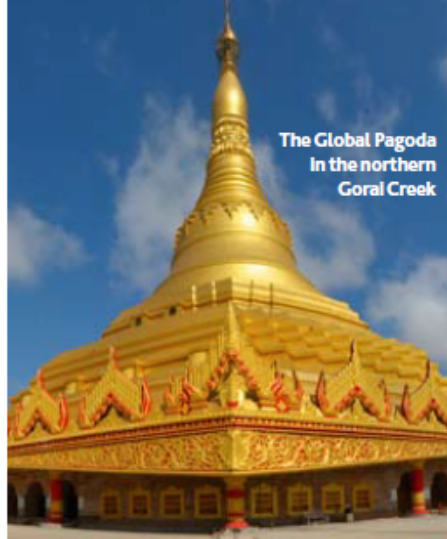
Lonely Planet's Mumbai expert, Amy Karafin, shares her pick of the city for free this month

1 GALLERY HOPPING
Mumbai has many of the country's best contemporary art galleries, most of them within walking distance of one another in the Colaba and Fort neighbourhoods. This spring sees a focus on photography: Dhruv Malhotra's haunting work is on show for free at Chatterjee & Lal gallery (22 March–18 April) while the Focus festival (13–27 March) offers free photography exhibitions in outdoor spaces across town (chatterjeeandlal.com; focusfestivalmumbai.com).

2 MARINE DRIVE
March is hot in Mumbai, so locals come to the shore for cool evening breezes. Take a walk up the iconic Marine Drive, which curls along the city's western coast, all the way up to Chowpatty, Mumbaikers' most-loved beach. Hang out with local families and balloon-wallahs while watching the sunset and nibbling on bhel puri, one of Mumbai's savoury street-food specialities.

3 GLOBAL VIPASSANA PAGODA
India has a 3,000-year history of meditation, so make some progress towards enlightenment by learning to meditate at the cavernous Burmese-style Global Pagoda. The world's largest unsupported dome structure, this modern building – completed in 2008 – seats 8,000 and is crowned with relics of the Buddha. Free 20-minute meditation classes are offered twice daily (globalpagoda.org).

4 BOMBAY PANJRAPOLE
Few people know about it, but right in the middle of a bustling market area in the city centre is this shelter for 350 homeless cows (plus a few donkeys, dogs, goats and birds). It's free to wander around and pet the cows (some of them babies), check in on the gals in the Pregnant Cows Department, or, for a small donation, feed them a bushel of greens (bombaypanjrapole.org.in).



The Global Pagoda
in the northern
Goral Creek

5 SHIVARATRI
On Sunday, 10 March this year, Hindus will celebrate Shivaratri, the 'night of Shiva'. After a day of fasting and processions, temples hold colourful all-night prayer vigils. Head to Mumbai's Babulnath temple to see lingam (phallic statues representing Shiva) ritually bathed and draped with flower garlands as the temple fills with the aroma of incense and the sounds of devotional music (babulnath.com).



AMY KARAFIN is a co-author of Lonely Planet's *India* guide and a lover of ghee-based sweets. She lives in New York.