

CULINARY JOURNEY THROUGH VANCOUVER

Indulge in the gastronomic pleasures that this Canadian city has to offer

Kalpna Sunder

Vancouver, Canada has a picturesque setting, where you can hit the beach or the mountains, trek in the temperate rainforest or use its 200 miles (322km) of bicycle tracks. But as much as the Vancouverites are active and sporty, they also eat, drink and party well too. This city is a foodie's paradise and its multi-ethnic character shows in its myriad restaurants ranging from Vietnamese and Chinese to Indian and Greek. Vancouverites love their caffeine and we find them everywhere with a latte in their hands.

Lots of seafood

We have a dinner at Rain City Grill in the West End district, which was one of the first restaurants to embrace local cuisine with flair. All seafood options on the menu are recommended by an 'Ocean Wise' logo which signifies a conservation program to ensure that fishing is sustainable. They have the 100-mile

menu that is basically based on the philosophy that all protein and produce should be procured within a hundred miles of where you live. What this does is prevent loss of nutrients as well as emission of greenhouse gases for its transport from far-flung places.

A bit of history...

Gastown was where the city of Vancouver started. It was named after John Gassy Jack - a talkative saloon owner who promised a barrel of booze to workers if they built his saloon in a day. For many years, it was a gritty, no-go

As much as the Vancouverites are active and sporty, they also eat, drink and party well. Their city is quite the foodie's paradise. -Kalpna Sunder

'skid row' or poor locality. In 2009, it was declared a national historic district and today, Gastown is also the new culinary epicentre. A slow process of gentrification has happened and though we still see the homeless and destitute crowds, there are snazzy restaurants, bars and

art galleries that give the area a certain buzz. Antique gaslights, cobbled streets and Victorian architecture make Gastown atmospheric.

Tapas bar

We start our evening at a small tapas-style bar called Judas Goat located on a street called Blood Alley, which was the meatpacking district of yore. The owner explains that it takes its name from the trained goat used in a slaughterhouse that leads sheep and cattle to their end, while its own life is spared. The bar is crowded and noisy, filled with hip couples and we feast on tapas like marinated beets with ricotta and rosemary honey, and roasted Polenta. We move to the Salt-tasting Room, a no-frills brick walled restaurant with communal tables and a blackboard with the day's combination menus of wine, artisanal cheeses and cured meats. The concept is quirky: you can order a flight of three different wines to mix and match with meat, cheese, bread or fruit.

Although the unlikely combinations first surprise me,



Vancouverites are fitness freaks but party well too



Vancouverites love their latte



Marinated beets with ricotta and rosemary honey



Fresh veggies at a local market

I'm wowed later by the taste of peach with fig and date bread, cheese and white wine. The last stop of the evening is the popular Irish Heather gastro pub where attractive Sean Heather is there to guide us through the sub-

tleties of whisky tasting. The pub serves creative combinations of beer, whisky, wine and locally cured meats. A tad blurry after an evening spent imbibing, my last thought is that 'Gassy Jack' will be pretty pleased with me.

Log on to laugh

This website lets users record, upload and share jokes via voice recordings in their regional languages

Nirmika Singh

nirmika.singh@hindustantimes.com

It all started with a joke-session at a friend's party last year. That's when the idea struck Sunil Verma to create a website dedicated to jokes. "One of our Oriya friends was feeling low at the party and we were trying to cheer him up with wacky jokes. I realised then that it would be great to have an online platform to share jokes

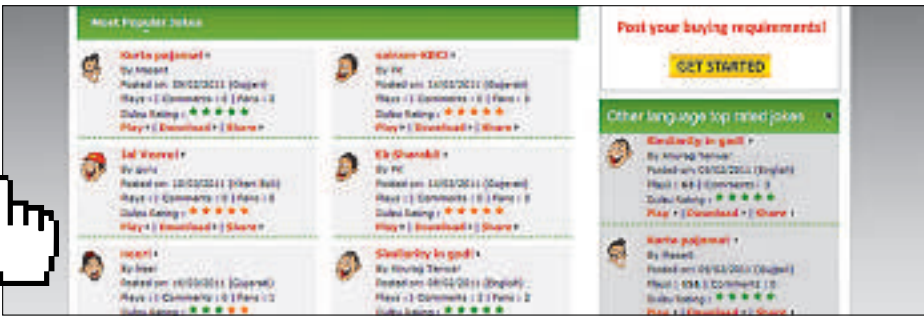
in different regional languages," says Sunil, a Delhi-based IT professional.

Dulzu.com, a website recently launched by Sunil and his team of 20 professionals lets users record, upload and share jokes in English as well as other Indian regional languages. "We wanted to do something different, other than merely sharing jokes in the written format. The essence of the jokes is often lost when read.

So on Dulzu, you can actually listen to jokes in your mother tongue and share them with your friends too," he says.



Founder-director Sunil Verma



To upload a voice recording, register and record the joke. You can also upload an audio file of the joke.

Currently, there are more than 500 jokes in 35 regional languages and dialects uploaded on the site. The popular languages range from Hindi, Bengali and

Punjabi to even Gujarati, Haryanvi and Himachali. "The whole point is to provide content that is otherwise rare. But listeners can also report jokes that are not in good taste. Also, we want to gradually expand the dulzu platform to include stories and educational information," informs the 36-year-old founder-director.

To get started, one has to

simply register on the site to record a joke. One may even upload previously recorded jokes. This month, the website will also launch its own app for Symbian, iOS and Android-based mobile phones. "Also, by the end of the year, we plan to integrate Dulzu on the telecom platform as well. We're just keeping our fingers crossed for now," Sunil signs off.

Q&A inbox



Don't expect a snow-covered Shimla right now, it only looks this way in the winter months

Not much to see in Chandigarh

We are visiting Delhi, Chandigarh and Shimla. We have thought of going for a car drive from Delhi to Chandigarh followed by Shimla. Is this route good? What are the other places that we can visit?

Anitha
While there is more than one way to reach Shimla, without going through Chandigarh, the easier way to go there from Delhi is via Chandigarh. This is because you have to go through the outskirts of Panchkula (which is the satellite town of Chandigarh) in any case, even if you take any of the alternate routes.

Take NHI from Delhi, which is a fantastic road that goes straight to Chandigarh. Ask anyone in Chandigarh and they will guide you on how to reach Panchkula and then take the road to Pinjore and Parwanoo, and continue to Shimla.

As you will be crossing Chandigarh, you can take time off to see the city. However, there isn't much to see over there except the Rock Garden and Sukhna Lake.

Shimla is not really known for sightseeing, but does have buildings of historical interest such as the Gaiety Theatre.

At this time of the year, Shimla will be pleasant, but don't expect snow. From Shimla, you can also go to nearby places such

as Chail and Kasauli. I am planning to visit Mysore. I have heard that there is a dam, which is a must see. Can you tell me more about this dam? How far is it from Mysore and what is so special about it?

Varsha
The dam is the KRS (Krishna Raja Sagar) Dam named after the late Sri Krishnarajendra Wodeyar, who was the grandfather of the present scion of Mysore. There is a beautiful garden called the Brindavan Gardens. You can avail cabs from Mysore to visit that place. There are also KSRTC (Kerala State Road Transport Corporation) buses that ply from Mysore Bus Stand. As for the dam's specialty, if you are interested in engineering trivia, then that is the largest lime mortar dam in Asia (and possibly in the world).

It was built at a time when there was acute shortage of cement. Sir M Vishveshwariya, suggested that the dam be built of lime mortar (instead of cement concrete), which would give the same strength as cement concrete. And true to his calculations, the dam has lasted till this date.



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