

# Faberge's imperial designs



Karl Gustavovich Faberge (1846-1920), was a Russian jeweller, best known for making decorated Easter eggs using precious stones and metals. His legacy is the series of Imperial Easter Eggs made for the Romanov Tsars of Russia, before the Bolshevik Revolution.

The story begins with the traditional custom of giving decorated eggs at Easter; Tsar Alexander III presented his wife, Empress Maria Feodorovna the first imperial Easter egg in 1885. Crafted from gold, its opaque, white, enameled shell revealed a matte yellow-gold yolk.

Empress Maria was so impressed that the custom continued until the tsar's death in 1894. After Alexander's death, his son Nicholas II, presented a Faberge egg,



both to his wife Alexandra Feodorovna and mother, the Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna. By then these eggs gained fame as Imperial Eggs and Faberge made 50 eggs, each with its unique element of surprise and mystery. Eventually Faberge became world famous and a 'goldsmith by the special appointment to the Imperial Crown.' He often took commissions to make similar eggs for his private clients.

The House of Faberge had created 50



eggs, of which 43 has survived. Over a century these brilliantly crafted objects have become a symbol of sophistication, power and wealth of the Romanov Dynasty (1613-1917 A.D.).

After the revolution, the Faberge' family left Russia and the company changed several hands, but the trademark is still owned by Faberge' Limited. While the hunt is still on for finding the missing eggs, some Faberge' Imperial Eggs are now in Kremlin armoury, and the rest are scattered around the world in the hands of private collectors.

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) has a significant collection of Faberge' objects donated by Lillian Thomas Pratt, and among the donated



pieces are no less than five elusive Imperial Eggs. This, according to VMFA, is the largest public collection outside Russia.

I had the opportunity to see some of these objects of famed art, at the VMFA and was mesmerised by the brilliance of the intricate designs and splendour of the richness of the shiny gold.

The Imperial Tsarevich Easter Egg, one that is on display, was created in 1912 for Empress Feodorovna as a tribute to her son the Tsarevich Alexei Nikolaevich. The surprise inside the egg is a diamond-set, double-headed eagle standing on a lapis lazuli (deep blue semi-precious stone) pedestal that holds two portrait views of Tsarevich Alexei Nikolaevich, son of Tsar Nicholas II and Empress Alexandra Feodorovna. The miniature portrait is of Tsar Alexei in a sailor suit.

The Imperial Pelican Easter Egg (produced in 1897) itself unfolds into eight ivory miniatures. It was presented by Tsar Nicholas II to his mother in 1898, and commemorated the centenary celebrations of the charities and the educational institutions she directed. The selection of the pelican motif was made as it symbolises maternal care and is the official symbol of the Dowager Empress's charities and institutions.

The Faberge eggs are a window to the history of the Russian empire, their glory and somewhat their ostentatiousness. Yet there is no doubt that these bejewelled pieces give us a snippet of a time that was followed by much turmoil. If you are interested to learn more about the Faberge eggs, just log onto: <https://vmfa.museum>

**By Aeman T Rasul**

**Photo courtesy: Aeman T Rasul**



## Sajek Valley—where hills touch the sky

If green, wilderness, serenity and tranquility are your mojo, make a trip to Sajek Valley - one of the most popular holiday destinations of Bangladesh. Recently, Sajek has been getting a lot of attention, and for all the right reasons. It is 80km from Khagrachhari, and the hills lie 2000ft above sea level.

The journey to Sajek Valley is a thrilling one - a two-hour drive on a steep road that leads to the destination. Punctuality will serve as a virtue here as almost everything must be done with precision. The journey usually starts at 10am from Dighinala, with personnel from Bangladesh Army accompanying civilians for added security.

From an ever-changing weather



that shifts from minutes of blazing sunshine to a spell of the heavy clouds obscuring the fiery sun, the bus-ride from Dighinala to Sajek Valley is simply mesmerising.

After you have finally reached the picturesque destination, you will feel a heightened sense of excitement. And if you think that was a view of heaven on Earth, then know this - what lies beyond is exquisite and beyond comprehension. You need to see it for yourself.

Do know this, the valley itself is small and somewhat secluded. There are only two army supervised hotels - Sajek Resort and Runmoi Resort. However, if you are the type who would prefer to enjoy the luxury of a sauna with a fair share of the view, this is not your place.

Sajek is about peacefulness, tranquility. It's a rare opportunity we get to leave our metropolis and become 'nature's child' as we once were. Outside the mobile network and far, far away Sajek offers the unique opportunity to unplug yourself, and experience some 'me' time; or for honeymooners, some 'we' time!

Do visit this beautiful place in Khagrachhari, do not miss the opportunity to experience the Alutila Cave, the Ricchang Falls or the Hanging Bridge.

From beautiful, sunny days to starry nights under the open sky, from adrenaline rush to peace of mind, you will find it all.

**By Mahee Azreen**

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