

Museum hopping online

In times of self-isolation, every activity we would find worthwhile — watching films/series to playing video games to reading books to even testing up some new savoury recipes — seems to become tiresome at one point. No matter how many films or books we lap up, we constantly badger for the world outside the confines of our home.

As the pandemic races on and puts us in a quagmire of uncertainty, with governments shutting off borders and most importantly, travelling both within and across borders, we are generally shut off from the world and its various overlapping mysteries and histories around us. However, even if physical travel is restricted on conspicuous terms, virtual travel can be an attractive option.

With one click of the mouse, we are able



to indulge in the grandeur of civilisations that have saturated our planet since time immemorial as museums throughout the world have begun to allow virtual tours. With virtual exhibitions and resources open to us, we are free to explore the world from the comforts of our couch via computers or smartphones.

GLOBETROTTER AROUND THE WORLD Virtual tours and exhibitions bring the world to us during the quarantine period. While it is true that some tours and exhibitions were already available online or on their respective websites, the



recent lockdown triggered by Covid-19 has made many more landmarks, museums, and galleries accessible online. Most of the exhibitions are digitised in collaboration with Google Arts and Culture, helping as our virtual tour guide in this journey.

The tour around history usually starts with one's own backyard, as numerous world-renowned museums have opened up virtual tours in neighbouring India with the famed Victoria Memorial Hall museum and Indian Museum, both based in Kolkata offering beguiling voyages through history and time. Mesmerise yourself with intricate artistic designs created by the mutual intermingling of cultural synthesis. Exhibitions are presented with slides and punctuated with descriptions and explanations. Travel through the annals of history from the pre-colonial to colonial period, presenting a flux of changes in the lived experiences of people as presented in lithographs and portraits.

Virtual independent exhibitions have also sprung up with collaborations from

different museums around the world to give us the best taste of the intersection of fashion, art, and history. One such project is the We Wear Project, a portal of discovery of the stories behind the various attires worn throughout history. With more museums roped in during this quarantine, it offers a fascinating encounter with the world of fashion and design as we never experienced before.

Encompass borders, continents, and cultures as you seek the treasure-troves of the world. The famed Louvre Museum in Paris, France, allows cruising through its majestic halls and corridors and its tempting sections such as the ancient antiquities and grande gallery. As the lockdowns have gotten more intense, famed art museums such as the National Gallery of Art in Washington have had its renowned art works viewable from its gallery on the Google Arts and Culture platform to provide a scope for art lovers and enthusiasts to plunge deep into the world of art, accompanied by curator commentary and helpful resources adding

another layer of acumen. From works by Da Vinci to quirky rebellious art styles to pop culture derived art, one can simply have a good day in art paradise.

ONE CLICK AWAY

While many of us might miss strolling inside the museums themselves and the quiet murmurs and soft giggles, the virtual museums are a comforting feel, acting as a vicarious window to the outside world.

Many of our little ones find staying indoors a rather painful experience, with no glint of hope of seeing their friends and running outside. With the opening of scientific museums online such as the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, children can peer deep into the wonders of history. With dinosaurs, fossils, artifacts and mummies, this is an educative and transformative tool for the child's insights about the evolution of the world around us.

We have all had moments of the silent awe when seeing a hypnotic multi-layered piece of work, which we would have loved to see upfront. Many renowned and well-known museums throughout the world, from the British Museum to the Dalí Theatre and Museum to Sultan Abdülhamid II's Yıldız Photography Collection to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, have opened up, granting access to the rarest and richest collections of visual archives on digital media to serve as a reminder to not give up hope in the darkest of times, and to keep on striving to do art, and seeking inspiration from art itself.

Be it sitting in your pyjamas coiled up in the room, or having a small fun family activity, the museum is always open for your own viewing, acting as a constant symbol of our entrenched connection with the world outside.

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Photo: Collected

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