



# Rethinking your WEEKEND PLANS

## Going beyond restaurants, cafes, and dining out

FAISAL BIN IQBAL

"What do I do during the weekend?"

Is this a question you often ask yourself on a Thursday evening, only to decide on dining out with your friends or family the very next day? More importantly, is this something you do every week – wondering how to spend your weekend just to end up at some restaurant in Dhanmondi, Mirpur, Uttara, or Banani? If so, you're a classic case of "there's nothing else to do on Fridays and Saturdays," and you're not alone.

For most of our youth, weekend plans are synonymous with dining out at restaurants. Especially in cities like Dhaka, there seems to be nothing else to do during the weekends other than eating at restaurants.

But is that really the case? For a city as vibrant and happening as Dhaka, must your weekend plans be restricted to only dining out? We asked several students and young professionals regarding their take on this, and the answer is no; your weekend plans can go far beyond the usual dining-out route.

For Abdullah Rahman, currently working at a renowned private bank,

For people living on the south side of Dhaka, Ramna Park and Dhanmondi Lake Park are good options as well. Other than that, another way to explore some greenery would be to check out the National Botanical Garden in Mirpur. The garden is big enough for you to explore and keep yourself busy for a good few hours especially if you're with friends and family.



The entry fee for individuals over the age of 12 is Tk 30 and for children between 6 and 12 years of age, the fee is Tk 15, for children below five, entry is free.

But if large crowds are not your thing it's better to avoid the garden or the Jolshiri Central Park, located in the Jolshiri Abashon project area in Rupganj, Narayanganj, serves as a good option. Apart from enjoying the greenery, you can also do a bit of boating.

Speaking of boats, ever thought of going kayaking in Dhaka? If the answer is yes, you might want to check out a popular kayaking spot right here in the city.

Located in Uttara's Diabari, this kayaking spot has garnered a lot of attention recently, partly because of how affordable it is, and partly because of the serene experience and breath of fresh air it offers.

"It's very close to the Uttara Centre Metro Station, and my friends and I have had the chance of kayaking there a couple of times now," says Sanjana Khan, a private university student. "An hour-long session will cost each person around Tk 150, so the affordability factor, coupled with the fact that it's a fun new thing to do in Dhaka, is what got us to try it out."

The popularity of activity-based weekend plans has been on the rise for quite some time now, particularly after the Covid-19 pandemic. Those eager to engage in such activities, while wishing for a bit of peace and quiet, often leave the city for any of the resorts spread

across Dhaka's outskirts. These resorts, if nothing else, offer a swimming pool, something that people can't seem to get enough of, especially during the hot summer days.

Then there are indoor arcades and gaming zones, like Toggi Fun World, which are welcoming to both kids and young adults. For Siam Ahmed,

Take a step back from the thrill and the neon lights, and you'll still find a lot of things you can partake in other than sitting at restaurants. For those of you who prefer



something more mentally stimulating, why not check out your city's art scene?

"Art and photo exhibitions make for fun weekend outings as you don't have to always stay engaged in an activity or conversation to enjoy them," says Afra Rahman, a private job holder. "You go there with your friends, maybe talk a little about what you're seeing, and that's it. Other than exhibitions, I think people who are into music and theatre should check out any of the several music and stage performances that take place in Dhaka almost every week.



More recently, I have been planning to attend a stand-up comedy show."

For a more curated experience, you can also consider checking out the many museums spread across Dhaka. The Bangladesh National Museum in Shahbagh should be on your list of museums to explore if you haven't visited it yet. Also, if you're in the Agargaon area, you could take your time to explore three interesting museums: the Liberation War Museum, the

Bangladesh Air Force Museum, and the Military Museum.

To know about all the events and exhibitions around you, check the 'Events' tab on Facebook. You'll be amazed to see the number of events taking place around you during the weekends.

You can also find people visiting "reading cafes", just to sit and read a book in a cosy, aesthetic environment. Others seek pleasure in casual shopping during the weekends. Some might be going out to buy daily necessities, some might be out looking to buy new clothing items or gadgets, while others might be browsing shops and looking to do a bit of window shopping.

"I find it hard to believe that you can't do anything other than dining out at restaurants or lounging around at cafes," Afra adds. "There's a lot happening during the weekends, especially here in Dhaka. During certain times of the year, you also have special events and fairs that take place across various venues within the city. Those, I believe, are also fun ways to spend your Fridays and Saturdays."

The possibilities for weekend activities go far beyond the predictable routine of dining out, especially in a city

**Speaking of boats, ever thought of going kayaking in Dhaka? If the answer is yes, you might want to check out a popular kayaking spot right here in the city.**

taking a walk at Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed Park in Gulshan-2 is his way of enjoying a good Friday.

"Working a full-time job gets hectic and takes a toll on my health," says Abdullah. "So, on most Fridays, I make time for myself and go for a walk in the park since it's near my home. I don't mind going to restaurants during the weekend but I feel that it gets too repetitive, especially when I am going on hangouts with friends. Now that the winter season is setting, and I don't have to worry about the uncomfortable summer weather, I feel I will enjoy these walks even more."

"Besides, the park also has a bookstore and a coffee shop," Abdullah continues. "Whenever I feel like taking a quick break, I pop into any one of these shops, maybe enjoy a quick coffee or browse through some of the new books, and head out again for a final couple of rounds of the park before heading back home."

Gulshan is home to a few other parks as well and walkers can be found at almost any part of the day.

as dynamic as Dhaka. From taking walks in a park to enjoying art exhibitions and stand-up comedy shows, you have more options than you think. So, the next time you find yourself contemplating yet another restaurant outing, consider stepping outside your comfort zone to discover the so many other experiences that await.

**Faisal** is the In-Charge of Campus, Rising Stars, and Star Youth.