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The Crescent KITCHEN



PHOTO: SAZZAD IBNE SAYED

Top 3 skincare trends that are defining the industry in 2026

As the beauty industry keeps evolving, skincare remains at the forefront of the evolution. From different kinds of technology to science-backed formulas and innovative ingredients, let's take a look at the top three skincare trends that can shape your skincare routine.

"Skinimalism" aka skin minimalism

Gone are the days of 10-step skincare routines, overdosed with all different actives. Even the Koreans, who were the master of 10-step routines are stripping off steps from their routines. Consumers are now looking for efficiency and efficacy and are paring back on the number of products they layer on their skin. With more skincare knowledge out there than ever before, they are realizing that less is more when it comes to skin health. Too many steps in the regimen can actually do more harm than good. Hence, there will be an



uptick of affordable efficacious products that target skin concerns, hydrate and protect the facial skin.

Enhancing the barrier

2026 is seeing a shift of focus on the health of the skin barrier. Consumers are seeking out gentle ingredients and formulations that will nourish and protect the skin barrier and the microbiome of

our skin. Products with barrier-strengthening ingredients such as ceramides, hyaluronic acid, niacinamide, panthenol etc. are just what you are looking for.

Hybrid multi-ingredient products

As our society tries to grapple with the realities of the cost-of-living crisis, along with rising environmental concerns and a general move toward minimalistic

skincare, consumers

are now looking for formulas that have more than one hero ingredient. Skincare enthusiasts and junkies are coming off the trend of using single-ingredient

products as they can lead to more waste and excessive layering can lead to skin irritation. Instead, they are now opting for products combining synergistic and efficacious ingredients in one bottle, making the whole regimen more affordable.

By LS Desk

Photo: Adnan Rahman

Model: Suhi

Fashion Direction & Styling: Sonia Yeasmin

Isha

Mua: Masum

Hair: Probina



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INTERIOR TRENDS TO LOOK OUT FOR IN 2026



Why do trends matter, really? Whether you are a follower or an anti-trend rebel in interior choices, you certainly do not want to invest a hefty amount in something outdated. Trends do matter because we like to stay relevant and hint that we move with the times. Here are five interior trends for 2026, predicted by global industry experts, and key points for you to consider before designing your dream home.

Colour trends

A warm, airy hue of white was chosen as Colour of the Year 2026 by Pantone, a global authority that forecasts colour trends across fashion, interiors, product design, and branding.

When Pantone highlights a shade

philosophy that brings clarity and calm. It is not just a trend but an intentional choice to stand out.

We are the most overstimulated generation in human history, and we need a home designed to help us unplug from the digital and reconnect with the physical.

Your home is one of the few places you can control and declutter. Through a minimalistic lifestyle choice, you can walk into a living room with a comfortable sofa in a soft beige that lures you to sit down and relax.

Refined minimalism has long been a trademark of Italian design, where sustainability, proportion, and material quality do the heavy lifting. Few design



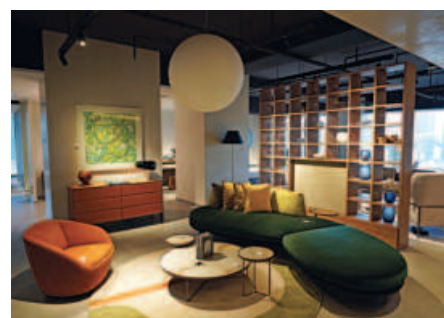
mechanisms. With the push of a button, you can lean back and give your back relief after an exhausting day. At other times, it functions as a regular sofa that entertains your guests.

Natuzzi has refined this category, creating recliner sofas where leather adapts to body temperature, and mechanisms remain smooth for years. These recliner pieces are now available at Shanta Lifestyle, making world-class ergonomic designs accessible locally.

Personalised spaces that adapt to your life

According to industry professionals, three or four years ago, luxury was largely about how something looked. Today, people want spaces that reflect their own personality, not just something out of a high-end catalogue.

This year is all about personalisation, presented in a more curated form. Plate walls, books, or other collectable items collected over the years, displayed tastefully, can give your space a beautifully curated designer look while showcasing something personal to you.



homes through brands like Shanta Lifestyle. In today's context, luxury is not just about finish, it is about responsibility.

Ergonomics and the silent return of recliners

As we speak, chairs and sofas are being redesigned and engineered, keeping comfort and health as the primary priority, not just aesthetics.

People now realise the impact of their sedentary lifestyle on back health, given

like cloud dancer white, it signals to trendsetters that this colour reflects the current mood of the world, which symbolises calm, serenity, and a fresh start amid a noisy world.

White reflects light, making apartments feel larger and brighter — an advantage in urban homes where natural light can be limited. It also aligns well with long-term thinking, not dating as quickly as other shades.

A white sofa bought in 2026 will likely still feel relevant in 2036. This colour trend signals the rising trend of effortlessness and minimalism in decor.

If you are looking for timeless aesthetic in the décor of your living room, the Natuzzi Italia Borghese sofa would be a prudent choice, a piece you can find in the collections at Shanta Lifestyle.

Refined minimalism is making its way back

In a world of visual noise, refined minimalism has emerged as a design

houses have interpreted this philosophy as consistently as Armani/Casa.

Armani Casa's interior pieces are now accessible through Shanta Lifestyle, bringing the visionary interior designs of Giorgio Armani from Milan to local households.

Opting for Sustainable Sourcing of Materials

Caring about the environment has become a conscious choice for people who are intentional about how they live. People are paying attention to where their furniture comes from. It is no longer enough for a piece to look good — it should also feel good ethically. Woods that are responsibly sourced, eco-friendly fabrics, and products that consider environmental impact are in increasing demand.

Indonesian teak woods managed through reforestation programs — where multiple trees are planted for every one harvested — are now entering Bangladeshi



lengthy commutes and the stress of urban life. The appeal of ergonomic features and recliners has shifted to a necessity, not just a trend.

Recliners have gone through a quiet transformation. Today's versions are sleek, architect-designed, and built with precision

It's all about adding that story back into your home this year and having items that can be conversation starters among your guests.

By Minhazur Rahman Alvee
Photo: Courtesy

How Maria turned personal pain into mental health advocacy

Growing up in a turbulent environment and witnessing first-hand her own mother's struggle against stigma and adversity, Maria's journey is a compelling narrative of bravery, resilience, and hope. From the runways of Miss Universe Bangladesh to the Head Offices of Moshal, Maria has clawed her way through a rigid society, claiming a space exactly where she deserves — right at the top!

The beginning of everything

Despite coming from affluent roots, Maria's mother faced ostracism from her own next of kin, simply for choosing to leave an abusive relationship. Hoping to start a new chapter of life, she moved to London with a three-year-old Maria in tow.

"But she fell in love there once again," shared Maria. "And against her good judgment, she decided to go back to Bangladesh for the man who was showing her dreams of a better life."

In an unfortunate twist of fate, however, Maria and her mother were left stranded by the very person they were hoping would be their saviour. A five-year-old Maria remembers her mother helplessly crying for help, unsure of what to do next.

"A lady took us in," reminisces Maria. "I remember entering a big house with many rooms. Inhabiting these rooms were many other ladies. We were given the last corner of the house, and the other women were told not to come near us."

Maria's childhood experiences were shaping her, but they were also chipping away at her mentally. She was smart enough to realise that she would have to work hard from an early age to keep a roof over her head — and she took up all kinds of jobs to do that. She assisted her teacher, worked at a supermarket in Dhaka as part of the sales force, anchored for embassies and even acted! What she did not know was that having to be strong from such a young

age would result in burnout, too heavy, too early.

How it came crashing

"In 2017, when I was in 9th grade, I began to experience excruciating pains in my stomach," shares Maria. "The doctors called it ulcers, and I was heavily medicated for a while, but there was no improvement." Over time, this pain caused her to vomit and even faint in school. "It affected my studies and my work," she noted. "I was so desperate to get better, I even tried contacting my estranged father, who, of course, wanted nothing to do with a girl child." As a result of her unexplained illness, Maria failed all her pre-test exams at Rajuk.

This was a huge shock to Maria. She was not able to accept that someone who was used to topping her class could finish her exams so miserably. "I had always been a fighter, but at that point, I had stopped fighting."



Maria

remembers the next few days in minute detail. "Three or four scenarios played in my head like a movie. I felt the presence of some people in my room who would harm me if I so much as flinched. I saw my room stretching longer and longer, and at times, I saw it red with blood."

When she finally moved, she felt like the people in the room had engulfed her, and she fainted. Upon regaining her senses, she knew something was very wrong with her. She called a friend who called another friend, a psychology student, luckily, and together they made sense of her condition.

"Clinical depression! Somatoform!" she exclaims. "I was so young, but here I was, spiralling down a path of darkness, and I didn't even understand the jargon!" They also informed her that she was actively hallucinating due to a lack of sleep.

Turning adversity into advocacy

The more Maria read up on psychology, the more interested she became. "I decided I did not want to be in Rajuk anymore, and chose to go for A Levels and psychology instead. Her stomach aches started making sense to her. She began understanding the student suicides taking place around her. The gaps in mental health support in her own country became more apparent, too.

"I found out that in Bangladesh, we have one psychologist for every 2,60,000

#PROFILE

HAMZA KHAN CHOWDHURY

The Curious World of an Influencer

Hamza Khan Chowdhury, an up-and-coming influencer with a community of three million followers and counting, sees his role in the spotlight as more of a responsibility, and less as just a springboard to fame. His vision is clear: to inspire Bangladeshi men to improve their lifestyle, their outlook, and their confidence, while staying true to their identity.

Known for his expertise in men's fashion, physical fitness, and international couple travel, Hamza has gradually built a name for himself that resonates deeply with the aspirations of young Bangladeshi men. A conversation with Hamza opened up the influencer world for us, laying out what makes this profession all that it is. Through his hard work and steady vision, Hamza wishes to leverage his personal brand and transform it into a global lifestyle, originating right here, in Bangladesh.

As the world gets increasingly demanding, especially for the youth of this nation, Hamza pulls the attention back to what he thinks is important: looking groomed, remaining fit, and maintaining healthy relationships. Emphasising inspiration and self-improvement, he urges young men to remember to live life, not simply get through it. "We only get one life," he insists.

THE INFLUENCER LANDSCAPE

The life of an influencer comes with its own set of challenges. The pressures of constantly being in the public eye and the occasional trolling are fairly constant in this line of work. However, Hamza seems to have found a good way around the negativity that sometimes accompanies his hard work as an unwanted third wheel.

"I do not view negative comments as trolling," he shares. Instead, he considers them valuable feedback. "If many people in my audience point out something, I treat it as a societal standard."

By reflecting on the messages behind the harshness, he manages to stay relevant, a mantra which helps him grow both personally and professionally.

Mental fatigue is another common part of the influencer journey, and Hamza openly discusses how he manages it.

"I try my best to present a true picture of my life," he shares. A believer of authenticity, Hamza states that he does not feel the need to present a façade of perpetual happiness.

"Life is not a straight line," he feels, emphasising that growth will always come with its ups and downs.

By sharing his struggles and triumphs with his audience, he aims to normalise setbacks and make himself more relatable to his followers.

"I feel like my followers are smart and they appreciate the reality I present over a make-believe, chirpy persona," he says.

"People connect more with honesty than with forced positivity." In the world of

influencers, looking sharp is important, and as influencers are more "real" than the average celebrity, their movements are unrestrained. As such, the likelihood of bumping into followers looms large.

Hamza acknowledges the pressure to stay groomed and "screen-ready" all the time. However, for him, this is not a burden but a lifestyle choice. "I've always wanted to stay fit and presentable," he explains. "My role in front of the camera forces me to stay committed and disciplined regarding my diet and style, even in the face of extreme temptation."

The influencer world, while exciting, is not without its shadows. The lack of privacy and constant observation can be demanding. Yet, Hamza, ever positive, thrives on it.

"I have worked hard for this attention; it is what attracted me to this profession, and it is what brings me my bread and butter," he confesses.

A profession that has shot through the popularity hoop, many influencers in the field decide their fates according to how they view their followers and how their followers like to see them. It is a job that pushes influencers to do their best and encourages others to bring their best selves forward. It is a career that looks fascinating, sounds easy, but is all about gruelling hard work behind the scenes.

Authentic influencers such as Hamza and the many others ruling the roost are exactly what content consumers in this age and time need — role models that youngsters can look up to, admire, and perhaps, emulate.

By Munira Fidai
Photo: Sourav Kabir





#PERSPECTIVE

Did you know that one person requires three trees providing 550 litres of oxygen to live healthily? However, in Dhaka, the actual statistic is that there is only one tree for 28 people! The city has become a jungle, but not the kind that's green. Concrete towers climb higher each year. Glass and steel swallow what little earth remains. Parks shrink. Trees vanish. The city expands, relentlessly, and somewhere in that mix, the idea of a garden becomes a fantasy.



Why more Dhaka homes are turning rooftops into GARDENS

People miss the green spaces that once dotted the landscape. But look closer, because a change is happening. Across the rooftops. Along narrow balconies. In corners of cramped apartments. City dwellers are fighting back against the concrete jungle by turning rooftops and balconies into gardens.

RBR, a prominent journalist at a leading newspaper, has been part of this movement longer than most. "I have always loved green. In fact, when I think of décor, the first thing that comes to mind is plants, before showpieces and furniture," she says. Her philosophy is simple but radical in a city where space is measured in square feet and priced like gold.

This is the new reality of urban gardening in Dhaka. It happens because people need it. Because the air is unbearable. Because the heat is unbearable. Because sometimes, you need to see something grow.

Small is beautiful. You don't need acres. A windowsill works. A balcony railing works. Even a tiny corner near a drain can become a sanctuary.

THE HEART OF THE GARDEN

People in Dhaka find joy in gardening. It starts as a hobby but grows into more. Take RBR, for example. She loved plants from a young age and never stopped. Her rooftop in Uttara began empty. Now it bursts with fruits, vegetables, herbs, and

favours for my mental health.

"At one point, I realised that I was out of control. Someone suggested gardening, and I promptly laughed it off as yet another dose of 'wisdom,'" he recalls.

He started with a ZZ plant. It needed little care. Soon, he added pothos and spider plants.

"With each plant, I started googling plant-care more and current news less. Soon enough, my entire balcony and most of my room were filled with plants," he adds.

Now he has a rooftop space full of tomatoes, chillies, mint, henna, roses, and frangipanis. Gardening keeps him steady. Tahmina Akhter, a 42-year-old schoolteacher from Mohammadpur, found escape on her rooftop.

"I used to feel trapped," she says. "The commute, the noise, the pollution. I would come home and still feel restless. Then I started planting a few pots of mint and coriander. Just to see if they would grow." Her space now has over fifty containers. It became her therapy. Evenings there bring peace.

MAKING SPACE WHERE THERE IS NONE

According to the Bangladesh Agriculture Information Service, approximately 4.5 lakh roofs cover more than 4,500 hectares in Dhaka city. That's land. Unused, unproductive, baking under the sun.

Rashid Hossain, a 35-year-old architect, saw that potential. Two years ago, he turned his family's Dhanmondi rooftop into a small urban farm.

"Our rooftop used to be unbearable in the summer. You couldn't stay there for more than a few minutes. Now, with the plants, it's cooler. The air feels cleaner. My mother, who has asthma, says she breathes easier up there."

Mithila, a 33-year-old working at a multinational company, grows basil, cilantro, green chillies, cherry tomatoes, capsicum, and gourds on her building's shared rooftop. "I was quite upset" when her cilantro went bad just after buying it, "and decided this is the sign to start growing things on my own!"

But not everyone has a rooftop. That's where balconies come in, though they present challenges.

Balconies need care. "Balcony gardening is tricky," RBR claims. Floors can be ruined by water. Pipes clog with mud. Use utensils to catch drips. Hang cast iron pots from railings. If the sun hits right, you can grow tomatoes, chillies, okra, or broad beans. Add a bamboo trellis for support.

No floor space? Go vertical. Use pallet walls like shelves for plants. Creeper plants

cover them in green. Corner racks turn dust spots into charms. Grill designs let vines climb. For kitchens, hang small pots on chains. Grow herbs like basil or mint. Trays with cells hold succulents. Trellis panels on walls, hook pouches or pots. Room dividers with wire netting separate spaces airily. Pocket gardens from shoe hangers work for doors. Up-cycled dressers stack drawers like waterfalls of green.

For indoors, pick easy plants. Pothos grows in low light. ZZ plants thrive in shade. Snake plants clean the air. These suit dim apartments.

TIMING AND CHOICES

The monsoon season, from late June to August, is ideal for planting in Bangladesh. The rain does half the work.

RBR grows vegetables seasonally. "In fact,

Daily Star, Rashid Shimul, founder and CEO of Green Me School of Alternative Skills Development, explains the need, saying, "The gardens in our cityscape mostly belong to enthusiasts and amateur gardeners, who have taken it up as a hobby. They don't actually have time or the know-how to take care of plants. So, it is of utmost importance to go to gardening service providers for the upkeep of your green spaces."

Gardening is technical. Fertiliser ratios matter. Watering techniques vary by plant. Pest control requires specific knowledge. Every plant has unique needs; some need less water, some need more, some need direct sunlight, while some need indirect sunlight.

Services like Green Me, AR Green Garden, Green Savers, and Green Garden Landscape and Design offer comprehensive solutions. They build soil beds, source plants, and help maintain gardens.

"Spending a fortune on acquiring the plant or tree and not investing in a proper gardener will have tragic consequences for your garden," Shimul warns.

BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO THE SKY

If you're reading this and thinking, "I'd kill a plastic cactus," rest assured. Dhaka's climate, after all that's said and done, is surprisingly forgiving, if you follow the rhythm of the seasons. Starting is simpler than you might think.

Sun and Drainage: You need at least four to six hours of sunlight. Ensure your roof has proper slope and drainage holes, lest you turn your roof into a swimming pool.

The Containers: You don't need expensive ceramic pots. Old paint buckets, wooden crates, and even rice sacks with holes poked in the bottom work wonders.

The "Hardy" Choices: If you're a novice, start with tomatoes, eggplants, or the near-indestructible mint and coriander. Marigolds aren't just pretty; they keep pests away from your veggies.

SOURCING YOUR GREENERY

Suddenly feel like taking up gardening after reading so far? Well, then, let's get you started on where you can pick up your new potted friends.

RBR offers guidance. "BRAC nursery is good, albeit a bit pricey. There are plenty of nurseries you can check out in Birulia, Savar, behind the rose garden," states RBR. Keep in mind, though, that nurseries outside Dhaka offer better deals, while city nurseries tend to charge a premium.

She recommends nurseries in Agargaon, Mirpur, and Eskaton. "The best one I found was near the Dhanmondi 8 field. They have plenty of options, and they communicate well."

Online options are expanding too, with platforms like Tree Haat, Bonayan.com, Aroneer, and Plant Shop, which ship across Bangladesh.

Rooftop gardening in Dhaka is moving from a small hobby to a serious movement. You can see more buildings adding green spaces to their original designs. Many schools now teach kids how to grow food in the city. Neighbours are working together to turn shared roofs into gardens that actually produce food.

The rooftops are changing. They are no longer just for water tanks or drying clothes. These spaces now show that a city can be more than just concrete and heat. If more people start planting on their own buildings, this could very well be the future.

By Intisab Shahriyar
Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed / LS Archive

DIY terrariums make nature accessible *for* BUSY URBANITES

In cities like Dhaka, where high-rises have replaced open fields and balconies are gradually shrinking into symbolic rectangles, a new kind of greenery is quietly taking hold. It is not your typical garden or sprawling houseplant, but a “miniature ecosystem” — small enough to sit on an office desk or a child’s study table. Terrariums, which are glass-enclosed micro-worlds of moss, ferns, soil and stone, are surprisingly attracting the attention of urban dwellers who want nature but need it in manageable portions.



A shift in urban lifestyles

They are small, somewhat low-maintenance and visually stunning. This is why more people are becoming increasingly interested in purchasing or making them. With green space disappearing, urban dwellers are searching for ways to bring nature into their homes, and this is where these miniature ecosystems come into play.

Terrarium Dhaka owner Md Moniruzzaman Akhund Shohag remembers the moment the idea took root.

“It was in 2019 when I came across some related online content. The concept was already popular in cities like Singapore, Seoul, Tokyo, and New York. However, in Dhaka, hardly anyone was actively pursuing it. That curiosity eventually pushed me into research, and I realised that it was possible to source materials and make terrariums here,” he explains.

Across town, another pioneer, Ashraf Rizve, CEO of Nature Aquatics, entered the field through planted aquariums. “I believe that the advantage is that their maintenance level is relatively low. If you properly set them up, it requires almost zero effort,” he says.

Although both Shohag and Rizve started before the trend caught on, today they find themselves at the centre of a



growing market. From younger hobbyists and aesthetically driven corporate buyers to parents searching for meaningful and hands-on activities for their children, the growing interest includes a diverse group of people.

According to Shohag, awareness remains low despite five years of work. “Not many people are aware that terrariums are made here. Most of my clients include people who are from abroad or follow global trends regularly,” he shares. In short, wealthy clients form the bulk of his customer base, especially those who purchase “miniature ecosystems” as customised home pieces or unique gifts.

Moreover, Shohag notes that there is a rising demand from corporations. For many companies, they can serve as symbolic gestures of sustainability and creativity.

Similarly, for Nature Aquatics, the clientele leans towards the corporate segment. “Our client base consists mostly of adults because we deal with the corporate sector,” Rizve explains. He recalls a recent order where bulk orders had been placed by a company as year-end gifts.

Additionally, Nature Aquatics works on larger installations called vivariums, combining water and terrestrial elements for reception corners or as office lobby décor.

Choosing plants and materials

On the outside, it may look stunning, but it is what goes inside that really matters. After spending a year on research, Shohag and his team finally settled on plants that can actually survive in Bangladesh’s humid climate.

“Fittonia is great and then there are some ferns that come from India or Thailand that can also be used. We tend to

control mould.

“Springtails eat the fungus that forms and prevent its spread,” he notes. This is where terrarium-making becomes miniature ecology, not just décor.

It is suggested that beginners should start with orchid soil or cactus soil purchased from nurseries. Various natural materials can also be sourced, such as small stones, sand, or branches from outdoor parks, echoing Shohag’s observation that it is fundamentally suitable for DIY projects.

Maintenance myths and practical realities

“I believe that the most serious problem arises when owners tend to keep their jars in air-conditioned rooms or under insufficient light. If they opt for weekly misting and exposure to indirect sunlight for several hours, I think that’s more than enough. This is the least anyone should do,” he suggests.

He warns against overwatering and direct sunlight, which are two common mistakes that can lead to the death of a crafted environment. A closed terrarium may act like a sealed greenhouse — too much heat can “cook” the plants, and too much water can collapse the ecosystem.

Rizve adds that anyone can use them as affordable experiments. “Even mayonnaise or coffee jars can be used for setting them up. All you require is some creativity,” he says. For advanced hobbyists, adding sculptures, figurines, or thematic elements turns these into a personal story.

Learning through hands-on practice

Recently, workshops have become the new gateway for curiosity. According to Shohag, hands-on learning creates stronger engagement than online tutorials. “I believe that workshops should be conducted physically so the concept becomes clear,” he says.

So far, Terrarium Dhaka has completed

multiple sessions and now plans to conduct weekly classes with more affordable pricing. The enthusiasm is high, especially among hobbyists seeking creative outlets.

Workshops also indicate a subtle shift: parents are increasingly looking for ways to give their children screen-free entertainment. With their tactile assembly and slow transformation, they offer a form of engagement that neither overstimulates nor isolates.

The future

According to both Shohag and Rizve, city dwellers have only just begun to understand the concept.

“I have seen that only recently; people are showing interest in them. In fact, many people do not know that we regularly conduct workshops,” says Shohag. The reason behind this might be that they are still not mainstream and there is plenty of room for growth.

Right now, these are often seen as premium lifestyle objects, something wealthy homeowners display in drawing rooms or corporate executive gifts as statement pieces. This scenario suggests a future that can go in two directions, either as premium, customised builds for affluent clients, or a more affordable DIY culture supported by workshops, starter kits, and school programmes.

Simply put, terrariums in Bangladesh are still at the early adopter stage. However, with workshop demand, corporate interest, rising curiosity among students, and the potential of school-based programmes, the appeal can grow. In a way, they fit the future of urban Bangladesh: smaller spaces, smarter choices, and a new kind of relationship with greenery.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Terrarium Dhaka/ Nature Aquatics/Unsplash



go for ferns and mosses such as cushion moss, ball moss, and fern moss as they survive very well.”

Rizve offers a simple breakdown for beginners. According to him, soil quality is very important. As for advanced hobbyists, he recommends ingredients like sphagnum moss, aqua soil, and even small living organisms like springtails that help

7 must-visit places in Singapore every traveller should experience

If you are the kind of traveller who wants to experience both classy places and be close to nature, then Singapore is your playground. You will feel instant gratification, and encounter places that feel simply unreal.

Here are 7 must-visit spots that prove this city has more than you can imagine.

Marina Bay Sands Skypark

Starting with the most iconic place in Singapore, which showcases the city to the world, because once you see the view from up there, you will understand why. The Glass Skypark sparkles like a galaxy, boats flow across Marina Bay, and the city lights up as the sun goes down.

The infinity pool is definitely the main attraction, and it's jaw-droppingly beautiful, just as it appears in the picture. Imagine floating 57 storeys above the ground. It is really dreamy, something you will never forget.



Marina Bay Sands

Even if you do not want to swim, you can just book a reservation on the deck during sunset and enjoy the view until dark and let the city do its magic. You will see how Singapore is showing off its beautiful view from that height and understand how it's earned the right.

Gardens by the Bay

Next is the place which feels like you have walked into a sci-fi movie, except for the fact that it's real and the whole place smells like orchids. After dark, when the light and music show start, the Supertree Grove looks like a visual drama. The whole vibe is so loud, colourful, and surreal in the best way possible.

The Flower Dome and Cloud Forest, with a massive 35-metre indoor waterfall and cool mountain air which controls the ecosystem, are just like a scene from the Avatar movie. This is where Singapore proves it can balance nature and innovation side by side.

The whole thing is designed to impress, relax, and experience something new and different. Stay until evening for the Garden Rhapsody, where the tree branches with light and music turn the whole landscape into a glittering concert. It's one of the most Instagrammable spots in Singapore.

Sentosa Island & Universal Studios

Sentosa Island is Singapore's "no excuses" playground. Beach? Check. Theme Parks?



Sentosa Island

Check. Cable Cars? Luxury Resorts? You name it, and you will find everything on the island. Sentosa is that kind of place where you plan to stay a few hours, but end up spending one whole day there.

We all know about Universal Studios, which has a site for every tourist's itinerary plan. So, starting the day at Universal Studios, it will take a whole day to roam around the place; after that, spend the afternoon at the beach and end the day with a beautiful sunset by the sea.

You can enjoy Sentosa without the chaos, but relax without feeling dull. If you want a break from city life without leaving



Chinatown

the city, then Sentosa is definitely your type of place.

Pulau Ubin

Pulau Ubin is another quiet escape from the city, where Singapore slows down, which feels like a deep breath. You just have to take a short bumboat ride and reach the soft and calmer side of Singapore that many tourists miss.

No big malls, no skyscrapers — just wooden houses, greenery, and paths which pull you to wander. First things first, rent a bicycle and visit places like Ketam Mountain Bike Park, Jelutong Bridge and the quieter mangrove areas.

Pulau Ubin reminds you that travel does not have to be chaotic, hectic, and busy. Sometimes, you just need to choose peace and let the island do its magic.

Haji Lane & Kampong Glam

Haji Lane is tiny but quite unforgettable to tourists. The narrow street is very vibrant, full of life, characters, and creativity. The streets are filled with cute cafes, indie boutiques, bold street art, and music playing softly in the background, which feels effortlessly cool and expressive.

Prices are very reasonable, vibes are friendly, and every corner is very Pinterest-y. Grab a coffee, spend an afternoon hopping shops and enjoy the vibe. Tourists visit Haji Lane but often miss the soul of Kampong Glam.

Walk beyond the colourful streets of Haji Lane to explore the Malay Heritage Centre surroundings, quiet side alleys and traditional perfume shops. Visit Sultan Mosque during non-peak hours for a quiet, calm, and meaningful experience.

The cafes here feel very intimate and local, not touristy, because people rush in for photos and leave without fully experiencing the culture.

Haw Par Villa

Another hidden gem, which is



Cloud Forest, Gardens by the Bay



Cloud Forest, Gardens by the Bay

recommended by one of the locals, is Haw Par Villa. Haw Par Villa is not a typical tourist attraction, and that's why you need to know about this. This place is surreal, cultural, and unforgettable. It is filled with Chinese folklore, moral tales, and mythologies in the most visual way possible.

The Ten Courts of Hell is bizarre, but something eye-catching and fascinating. It's free to enter, not very crowded, and perfect for people who want to explore history and culture. Haw Par Villa proves that Singapore is not just classy and modern; it also has a mystical side.

Chinatown

Lastly, Chinatown in Singapore is where the cool side comes out to play. It's colourful, chaotic, and fully packed. The streets are buzzing, smell of food all over the place, and they are filled with souvenir shops. Chinatown is the place where tradition and modern life mix very naturally.

You do not need to plan an itinerary here; you just have to roam around, explore, and eat. At night, the streets light up with lanterns and neon lights, which makes the vibe effortlessly cool. Try different types of local dishes, browse shops, observe the place — no rush.

Chinatown feels alive in a very addictive way, which is perfect for travellers who want to feel the city's rhythm. It is very tourist-friendly, and full of moments that make a trip memorable.

Singapore is not just a pin on a map; it's a whole other experience that makes you feel awed, close to nature, and filled with culture at the same time. The country is very safe, clean, and designed very thoughtfully. You can take a short trip without feeling rushed and tired.

By Faria Nowshin Tazin
Photo: Collected



How Maria turned personal pain into mental health advocacy

thing she did was jump into social work. Harnessing her experiences of mental distress and recovery, she decided to use her newfound fame to become an advocate for mental health. She started a seminar on suicidal ideation and parenting styles with just 25 people and 2 psychologists, in a small room. This turned into 300 parents, teachers and students all across Dhaka schools.

"This was Moshal's inauguration event!" she exclaims.

Moshal

Moshal started in 2020, with only two psychologists. Maria

had studied international service standards and was offering streamlined services to her clients; the results were phenomenal.

Five years down, Moshal now has 36 psychologists and psychiatrists around the world, such as the USA, Canada, Oman, Australia, and Bangladesh, serving both national and international clients. It has served more than 5,000 clients and impacted 3.5 million people. It has reached out to crowds of 60,000 with seminars and webinars, and has 35 campaigns under it.

A year after its conception, Moshal received the Diana Award. It was the first mental health organisation to win this award, and Maria was the youngest person to hold it. "It has been quite a journey," she agrees, gratefully. "I was the CEO Moshal initially, and right now, I remain as a founding President on its board. We are one of the leading mental health institutions in the country."

Moshal operates both online and offline. Their office has two psychologists, but they also actively send clients to psychologists' personal chambers. "Most of our clients are online, as Moshal is the only mental health organisation in Bangladesh that is operating with international psychologists. And that is one of our biggest strengths," mentions Maria.

International psychologists under Moshal have studied abroad, are established there, and many belong to the Bangladeshi diaspora. "A service that would cost you \$200 to \$300 outside Bangladesh can be availed from Moshal for as little as BDT 1500 to 2000."

Moshal also has an initiative called Pashe Achi, which runs from 6 PM to 2 AM. "It is not an emergency hotline, but it is a non-judgmental friend in need — a physical person who listens to you when no one else will."

These thirty-to-forty-minute calls are operated by trained psychology graduates who have been supervised by

Moshal professionals. "Psychologists cannot give instant service, but these students can. Pashe Achi has received a great response."

On the horizon

"Upscaling Moshal is now the plan," shares Maria. "The model is completely manual, so we want to automate it so that it can become as accessible, as affordable, and as effective as possible." Maria wishes to offer Moshal's services to diasporic communities. "We have a huge pool of international psychologists, so we want to give services to Bangladeshis here and to the Bangladeshi community abroad, including students who cannot afford mainstream services abroad."

As Maria nears her 25th birthday, she envisions a future where mental health is no longer a taboo subject. She aspires to establish a retreat where individuals can learn about mental wellness and develop coping strategies in a supportive environment.

"We are part of the privileged, progressive mentality of Bangladesh, but we comprise not even 1 per cent of the total population of this country. The majority of our people are still not open to concepts of mental well-being."

Maria does not deny that progress has indeed taken place, but she does maintain that it has not been fast enough or standardised. "There have to be more structural changes. Our government needs to pass laws on this, and educational institutions need to hold workshops in schools and universities. Micro changes need to happen within families, with parents," urges Maria. "Organisations like ours cannot work alone."

Maria feels that the taboo around mental health will be removed when it is recognised by the government as a national concern. "There are centuries of work left for us to do."

By Munira Fidai

Photo: Sourav Kabir

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

patients. Can you believe that?" exclaimed Maria. "I realised how lucky I was to have found help the way I did. Had the other suicide victims I knew received the help they needed in time, they would be alive now."

Maria's own experiences, marked by struggle and resilience, ignited her passion for change.

During her first year of A Levels, Maria, already known through her acting gigs, was encouraged by a friend to participate in the Miss Universe beauty pageant for Bangladesh. She quickly realised that winning this pageant could offer her a bigger platform to talk about her real passion — mental health and psychological wellbeing.

Confident to the core, Maria went on to become a 4th runner up at the beauty contest, and the next





Typhoon

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#FOOD & RECIPES

What to cook this Shab-e-Barat: Traditional and festive recipes

On Shab-e-Barat, kitchens of South Asia come alive long after dusk. It is a night shaped by quiet devotion and the sharing of sweetness. From slow-cooked halwas to carefully shaped breads, each dish carries patience and love. The following recipes draw from familiar festive traditions as well as distant culinary memories, coming together in the spirit of Shab-e-Barat's generosity. In every bite lies a reminder that faith is often expressed not just in prayer, but in the quiet act of feeding one another.

BREADS

Stuffed Carrot Halwa Buns

A celebration bake that combines wintertime carrot halwa with soft, home-style bread, echoing the scent of festivities lingering in warm kitchens.

Ingredients

For the bread –
3 cups flour
½ tsp salt
1½ tsp sugar
2½ tsp yeast
1 egg
¼ cup lukewarm milk
1½ tbsp lukewarm water
1 tbsp oil
Water as required
For the filling —
500g carrots
1 cup milk
2-3 cardamom pods
¼ cup sugar
2 tbsp ghee
¼ cup mawa
¼ cup nuts

Method

In a bowl, add and mix the dry ingredients — flour, salt, sugar, and yeast. Then, pour in the egg and milk and add sufficient water to form a dough. When the dough has a very sticky consistency, add oil and make the dough smooth. Give it a final coating of oil and let it rest, covered in a warm place, for a couple of hours.

Now, peel and grate the carrots. Pour milk in a pan and add in the carrots and



cardamom and mix. Wait for the milk to come to a boil. When it starts to boil, cover with a lid and let it cook for 20 minutes on medium-low heat, stirring occasionally. Then, pour in ghee.

Once fully cooked, set the flame to medium-high and add sugar. The sugar will release juices, so stir and cook until all the liquid evaporates. After that add mawa and mix. Finally, add in chopped nuts and stir,



and then remove from the heat.

Once the dough is done, punch out all the air and form balls. Spread out the balls and place sufficient carrot halwa in the centre. Seal the edges to make a crescent shape and let these rest for 10 minutes. Then bake in a preheated oven at 170°C for 20-25 minutes, and they will be ready to serve!

Nokshi Bread

Ornamental and celebratory, this flower-shaped bread recalls special occasions when baking was as much about beauty as it was about sharing.

Ingredients

4 cups flour
1 egg
3 tbsp sugar
½ cup lukewarm milk
1½ tsp yeast
1 tbsp sesame seeds
1 tbsp butter
3 tbsp oil
¼ cup raisins
¼ cup candied fruits
Water as required
A pinch of salt

Method

Add in flour, salt, sugar, and yeast to a bowl and mix. Crack one egg and then pour in warm milk and oil. Mix these together to form a dough and add warm water as



needed to make the dough smooth. Once the dough is formed, place it in a bowl coated with oil and leave it covered in a warm place for 25-30 minutes.

After that, the dough should have risen. Punch the dough to eliminate all the air and form little discs from it. At the bottom of the disc, place some candied fruits, and then fold it to form a semi-circle. Then, place raisins on one side and fold again to resemble a petal. Place a raisin on top of each piece of dough.

Take a round baking dish and brush it with oil. Start placing the pieces of dough from the edge and move towards the centre to make a complete flower. Then, let this rest for 20 minutes and brush the top with milk. After that, sprinkle sesame seeds on top and let this bake in a preheated oven at 180°C for 40-45 minutes. Once done, while the bread is still warm, brush with butter on top and enjoy!

TRADITIONAL PLATTER

Sweet Potato Halwa (Mishti Alu Halwa)

A winter favourite steeped in nostalgia, bringing back memories of slow-cooked sweets made on quiet afternoons.

Ingredients

2 cups grated sweet potato
1 cup full cream milk powder
¼ tsp cardamom powder
¼ cup ghee
¼ cup mixed nuts, chopped
1½ cup sugar or as per taste

Method

Heat ghee in a non-stick pan. Add grated potatoes. Fry on low heat until it turns slightly golden in colour. Add milk, sugar, and cardamom powder and mix well. There should not be any lumps. Stir continuously until the halwa turns dry. Add mixed nuts and mix well. Cook for another 2 minutes. Garnish with nuts and rose petals and serve.

Habshi Halwa

Dark, dense and indulgent, this halwa recalls old banquet tables and the grandeur of festive feasts.

Ingredients

2 litres of fresh milk
3 tbsp white vinegar
1 tsp citric acid, mix it with 1 cup of water or 1 lemon juice
1 cup sugar
2 tbsp cocoa powder
½ cup flour
½ cup crushed almonds
½ cup crushed walnuts
1½ cups ghee
1 tsp cardamom powder
8-10 pieces of pistachios sliced
4 tbsp liquid glucose

Method

Bring the milk to a boil. Add citric acid and water. Mix in the milk. Turn off the flame and cover it for a few minutes till the milk separates. Now cook it on high flame till the water dries up.

While drying the water, add cocoa powder, cardamom powder and mix well. Switch off the flame; add sugar, vinegar, plain flour, and half of the ghee.

Mix well, and on the flame set to low or medium, keep stirring. While stirring, keep adding the remaining ghee (1 tbsp at a time), till the ghee comes to the surface.

Once the ghee comes on the surface add some nuts, mix well. Add the liquid glucose, mix well. Make sure there is no water in it. Now transfer the halwa to a ghee-greased tray, garnish it with the remaining nuts and pistachios. Leave to cool down. Cut in pieces and serve.

By LS Desk

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed