**Fun Under One Tent**

Sitting under the stars listening to an acoustic band, followed by a bonfire, sounds almost gimmicky. But when you spend a weekend at Bandcamp, and watch the performers effortlessly go from Rahat Fateh Ali Khan and Leonard Cohen to their own compositions, you find your guard dropping. Organised by White Collar Hippie, a travel company, Bandcamp manages to get this and every other element of the experience right.

The campsite is located atop a hillock in Uttan, a quick drive from Mumbai. This means that the air is fresh, and the sea views unobstructed. The tents are clean, and each accommodates two sleeping bags. The campsite itself is shaded by trees and thoughtfully laid out, with ample room around each tent. The thoughtfulness is evident in other ways too – like the communal shower area, which is covered with smooth stones. This lets the water seep through, and keeps your feet from getting muddy. Each visitor gets a welcome pouch that contains a mosquito repellent and a small torch, among other things – minor treats if you enjoy collecting toiletries from hotel rooms.

Once you’ve settled in, you can go ahead and explore the fishing village that surrounds it. Walk down to the end of Uttan Pali Road, past St Andrew’s Church, and take the steps down to the jetty (20 minutes). From here, you see the Vasai Creek widening and spilling into the ocean, and the mangroved fringes of Virar. The boat repair yard on the other side of the village is also worth a visit (10 minutes). Get up close to large fishing boats in various stages of completion, and marvel at their subtle craftsmanship and the outlandish paintings that decorate the hulls. You can even join the fishermen when they go out to sea at first light (free, but do tip generously).

The camp also organises a sunset walk in the evening (20 minutes). You’ll first be taken to the highest point on the hill. From there, you’ll make your way down,
to know your neighbours for the night, or the affable staff and volunteers. You’re free to carry your own alcoholic beverages, and pair them with the chicken, paneer and mushrooms that come fresh off the grill. There’s dinner later too, which comprises tasty Indian dishes homecooked by a local family. Later in the evening, the two musicians, armed with quick wit and guitars, take the stage. They play off the crowd, letting you be part of the fun. You can request songs, or, if you’re feeling adventurous, join them. The singing can go on well into the night. A bonfire is eventually lit, by which you can keep yourself and the marshmallows warm.

The next morning at sunrise, if you can wake up by then, attempt the nature walk (10 minutes) that rambles through the woods behind the campsite. Basking in the filtered sunlight, with the chirps of drongos and starlings all around, makes it worth the effort. You could also go for a swim at U-tan Sea Resort next door (₹300/ person; 10am – 6pm). But chances are you’ll end up spending the rest of the day playing Jenga, and making small talk with the staff and volunteers. Or you’ll end up lazing about in a hammock, putting off your drive back to civilisation.
**FACT SHEET**

**GETTING THERE**

Closest metro: Mumbai (50km) is an hour-and-a-half away by car. However, make sure you avoid the traffic by hitting Dahisar Check Naka before 5pm. The journey can take considerably longer otherwise.

Closest airport: Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport (about 35km away) is well connected to Indian cities.

Closest railhead: Lokmanya Tilak Terminus at Kurla (54km) for outstation trains, or Dahisar Station (18.5km) on the Western Line for local trains from Mumbai. All trains to Bhayander or Virar stop at Dahisar.

**GETTING AROUND**

Most of the highlights are well within walking distance from the camp. However, there are shared rickshaws that run up and down the main roads (₹ 15 to ₹ 20). We used Anfa Travels (Laeeq: 00-91-9821352185; from ₹ 2,800/day for an AC sedan).

**WHERE TO STAY**

Bandcamp: 00-91-9930260748; www.facebook.com/whitecollarhippie; travel@whitecollarhippie.com; Bandcamp, behind U-tan Sea Resort, Dongri, Bhayander West, Fri & Sat: ₹ 2,500 adult, ₹ 1,500 for kids (four to 12 years), rates include dinner and breakfast; weekdays: ₹ 2,200 adult, ₹ 1,200 child, music performances only happen on Fridays and Saturdays.

**WHERE TO EAT**

Dinner, snacks and breakfast are all organised at the camp. For dinner, there's barbeque along with homemade dal, rotis, a veg and non-veg curry and rice. Soft drinks are also provided. For breakfast, there are loaves of bread and a choice of spreads, or wait for the homemade treats, which range from poha to puri and chickpea curry. Snacks, tea and coffee are never in short supply here. If you wish to eat lunch at the camp, inform the organisers in advance (₹ 300). Else, you could visit the restaurant next door at the U-tan Sea Resort, which serves Chinese, Indian and continental options (00-91-22-28452345; www.u-tan.com; 8am – 10.30pm; mains from ₹ 250).

**SHOPPING**

There aren't many local shopping options here but, if you're really keen and have your own car, you could head to the local fish markets on your way home. Seafood – fresh from the nets – is available. The prices vary daily, so make sure you get a good idea of the prices before you buy.

**WHAT TO PACK**

Mosquitoes are a real menace at the campsite, so carry pyjamas and anything long-sleeved. Also carry some of your own mosquito repellent, in case what's provided to you runs out. Carry a small pillow, too, if you need one.

**GOOD TO KNOW**

- There is no itinerary as such, so make sure you inform the staff about the activities you're interested in doing when you get there. This will give them enough time to arrange everything.
- There are only a few charging points, so make sure your phone is fully charged or carry a power pack. Or, better still, just switch it off!
- The terrain around the campsite is hilly and uneven, and you may find it slightly strenuous.
- You're free to carry your own alcoholic beverages. Be sure to carry a liquor permit (₹ 5) and receipts.
- Friday nights are outdoor movie nights with a short live band performance and a late-night movie screening.
- Saturday night is band night with a longer music session.

**CLEAN LOO GUIDE**

The loos here are shared Western loos, separate for men and women, and are as good as it can get for a campsite. The communal showers also have hot water.

**SAFETY**

The campsite is well-lit, and the organisers have a good rapport with the people of the village. Nonetheless, it would be advisable to stay within the camp premises after dark.

**MEDICAL AID**

The village has an ample number of pharmacies and clinics. In case of any emergency, the campsite has a doctor on call (Dr Vasant Mante: 00-91-9870907888).

**CHILD-FRIENDLINESS**

With board games, a volleyball net and lots of open space, the camp is great for children of all ages. It also serves as an excellent introduction to camping ("glamping" doesn't count). The staff organises kids' summer camps every year and this experience shows, as they go out of their way to keep children entertained.